

Peach Blossom Spring

RICHARD M. BARNHART

The Metropolitan Museum of Art







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GARDENS AND FLOWERS

IN CHINESE PAINTINGS

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*This exhibition and catalogue are dedicated
to the memory of
Phyllis Ellsworth Dillon*





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Foreword

A VAST IMPERIAL PLEASURE PALACE on the outskirts of the T'ang dynasty capital is the subject of a set of hanging scrolls (No. 40) acquired for The Metropolitan Museum of Art by The Dillon Fund in spring 1982. Working in 1691 with shimmering azurite and malachite, the artist Yüan Chiang gave the seventh-century Chiu-ch'eng Palace—the “Palace of Nine Perfections”—an imaginative splendor that may have surpassed that of the original. The acquisition of this set of twelve paintings lent impetus to the suggestion of the distinguished collector John M. Crawford, Jr., that the right moment had arrived to mount a show of garden and flower paintings at the Museum. In addition to the T'ang garden palace, viewers will find depictions of private gardens full of mystery, wonder, and innumerable blossoms, painted both in the vividly realistic court style as well as in the refined literati mode of pale color, or in the most subtle technique of all—shades of pure ink.

The exhibition *Peach Blossom Spring*, like the garden of the Astor Court nearby, communicates the importance of gardens and the contemplation of nature in the Chinese tradition of self-cultivation. Quiet reflection was one of the most significant activities in the garden. To let the mind ramble at ease in that imaginary world was to nurture equanimity and possibly to gain a degree of enlightenment. The author Shen Fu, a garden enthusiast, put it this way: “I used to crouch down by the hollows and protrusions of the mud wall or among the tangled grasses and bushes on the raised flower beds, so that I was on the same level as the flower beds. Then I would compose myself and look closely, until the clumps of grass became a forest, the ants and other insects became wild beasts, the clods and pebbles which jutted up were hills, and those which sank down were valleys. My spirit roamed freely in this world and I felt completely at ease” (ANDREW H. PLAKS, 1976, p. 164).

These paintings, similarly, invite us to share an attitude of playfulness, to experience the delight of imaginative leaps into illusion. We are encouraged to closely approach delicate images of nature, to let our spirits roam through detailed spaces. We will be rewarded in the very least by the sheer beauty of masterly evocations of flowers and gardens. But greater pleasure is promised to the readers of the catalogue, as they comprehend the deeper layers of significance inherent in these works. Our thanks are extended to Professor Richard Barnhart of Yale University for his elegant text, which guides the reader through the inner world of garden paintings and reveals their many symbolic meanings.

We are particularly grateful to the Honorable C. Douglas Dillon, and to The Dillon Fund, whose generous grant covered the costs of producing the cata-

logue. Of still greater import, it is Mr. Dillon and The Dillon Fund who have lent or have helped the Museum to acquire almost half of the splendid scrolls in the exhibition. Thanks are also due to The Crane Company, John M. Crawford, Jr., John B. Elliott, and Arthur M. Sackler, who were kind enough to lend paintings to the exhibition.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO
Director

Preface

THE PAINTINGS in this exhibition can be easily divided by subject matter. The majority belong to the category of “flower and bird painting,” a genre that masks a rich diversity of subjects, perhaps better summarized by the term “fragments of nature.” These fragments come into focus above all in the garden, whether in the city or beyond it, in the wilds or in the imperial summer palaces. The garden is the prism that directs our attention to nature’s detail. But the garden is also discrete and private, one of a cluster of special domains that have in common their separation from the ordinary world. Their inhabitants are scholars in retirement, hermits, sages, and immortals. Their grounds may be as modest as a poor scholar’s garden, or as extravagant as an imperial palace complex high in the mountains. The exhibition offers us, then, two approaches to the garden: we can become dream travelers whose journeying takes us into the world where the Chinese garden grows; and we can experience the garden’s detail from within, observing the flowers and birds that fill it.

We enter these domains through the eyes and the art of a succession of painters and poets who found in their gardens sanctuary. Within the pattern of official history dynasties come and dynasties go, but history rarely penetrates to the fundamental realities we pursue. The passage of individual lives, the changing of the seasons, the coming and going of flowers and birds, the response of men to time and memory in the face of the transit of beauty—these are the truths we seek in our imaginary gardens. They escape the web of history, but are preserved in art and poetry.

The fifth-century poet T’ao Ch’ien, above all others, is synonymous with the experience of the garden. It was he who defined the state of mind to be found within the garden, the joys and regrets of its cycles, and the ideal of paradise on earth that he believed could exist at the Peach Blossom Spring. His inspiration will appear again and again in the art we examine.

I regret that the exhibition must end with the eighteenth century. Almost every major painter of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries has achieved eminence in the painting of flower and bird subjects. I would particularly have liked to include works by Hsü-ku, Chao Chih-ch’ien, and Ch’i Pai-shih; they bring the tradition into our time with tremendous vitality and originality. Their very preference for these subjects and for informal portraiture is of interest. The portraits suggest their modern fascination and affection for individual personalities, which in turn have always been a central element in the depiction of gardens and flowers. For the scholar’s garden is an image of himself; his response to the trees and flowers of his garden is the response of an individual to sensual

beauty, to the colorful, transient facets of nature, and to the joys and sadness of joining self to universe, memory, and symbol in the creation of an art that embodies self.

I would like to thank John M. Crawford, Jr., for first suggesting the idea of this exhibition, and Wen C. Fong, special consultant for Far Eastern affairs at the Museum, for supporting it in his generous manner. Alfreda Murck, assistant curator-administrator in the Department of Far Eastern Art, has been throughout a calm and deep sea of support and assistance on virtually every detail. Rosanne Wasserman, my editor, alone knows the embarrassment she has spared me.

Two of my students at Yale have been very helpful in a number of ways, including the preparation of catalogue entries and the translation of several poems, to which their names are appended. Jonathan Hay, now an East Asian Fellow and studying in Japan, and Elizabeth Bennett, also in Japan, studying traditional Japanese music at the College of Fine Arts, Tokyo, both lent assistance at timely moments.

My wife, Joan Panetti, a creator of the most extraordinary beauty, deserves far more than the simple thanks I here express.

R. M. B.



No. 1. **Peach Blossom Spring**, dated 1646. *Fan Ch'i* (1616–after 1694); Leaf G from an album of eight leaves, ink and color on paper; The Sackler Fund, 1969; 69.242.10g

Peach Blossom Spring:

T'ao Ch'ien and the

Ideal of the Garden

WHAT WE NOW REGARD as the characteristic forms of artistic thought and expression in China found their beginnings during the period of the Six Dynasties (220–589), in the centuries after the collapse of the Han dynasty. The history of “modern”—that is, traditional—Chinese painting begins with Ku K'ai-chih (ca. 344–ca. 406) and Lu T'an-wei (ca. 440–500); of calligraphy with Wang Hsi-chih (303?–361?) and Wang Hsien-chih (344–388); of lyric poetry with Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433) and T'ao Ch'ien (365–427). The philosophy of the garden begins with T'ao Ch'ien as well.

Certainly there had been quiet, secluded gardens long before the fourth century; some even entered the popular imagination along with the individuals who inspired them. Among the seven modest sites in the Garden of Solitary Pleasures built by the scholar Ssu-ma Kuang in 1073, three were inspired by men who lived during the Han period. One was the hermit Yen Kuang, who built a simple fishing platform by the river and refused to accept imperial appointment. Another was the herb gardener Han K'ang, who feared that his reputation for honesty in the marketplace would entangle him in the snares of life, and so fled instead into the mountains and disappeared. The third was the scholar Tung Chung-shu, so engrossed in his intellectual preoccupations that for three years he did not even glance out at his garden! Whatever their gardens may have looked like, the men associated with them were admired as exemplars of human virtue, and it was possible for Ssu-ma Kuang, eight or nine centuries later, to build his own garden so that it recalled and commemorated them, as well as others, including T'ao Ch'ien. To remember Han K'ang one simply planted a small herb garden; Yen Kuang required only a hut by a pond stocked with fish; Tung Chung-shu was recalled in the construction of Ssu-ma Kuang's study-library overlooking the garden. Both the inevitable ephemerality of the garden and this association with historical personalities suggest the simplicity of the actual physical requirements of Chinese garden construction. A clump of bamboo by a courtyard wall or a small pavilion suitably sited were all that was necessary. A wall enclosing space defined a private precinct, and that precinct would be understood to be apart—to be a garden.

The concept of individual freedom was sharply limited in traditional China, and almost purely Taoist in origin. Within the sphere of Confucian thought, the idea scarcely existed. Locked inside the grid of obligations, duties, responsibilities, and expectations to which he was subject throughout his life, the Chinese scholar could find release only in nature—or in madness, as Wolfgang Bauer (1976, pp. 131–202) observes. Actually, the madness of so many distinguished Chinese artists

is more than a medical statistic. The pretense of madness—along with claims of filial devotion to aging parents and of personal illness—was a means by which one might attain freedom. Other ploys included willful eccentricity, public debauchery, drunkenness, travel, and loyalty to fallen dynasties. But the easiest and most common escape of all, of course, was simply the garden. Once there, the clock of obligation, duty, and office stopped.

In one of his *Twenty Poems After Drinking Wine*, T'ao Ch'ien describes the state of mind that can exist within the garden:

*I build my hut beside a traveled road
Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.
You would like to know how it is done?
With the mind detached, one's place becomes remote.
Picking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge
I catch sight of the distant southern hills:
The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets
And flocks of flying birds return together.
In these things is a fundamental truth
I would like to tell, but lack the words.*

(JAMES ROBERT HIGHTOWER, 1970, p. 130)

Within the garden one pursues a state of detachment from the world outside. Mindlessly preoccupied with the minutiae of flowers, birds, and trees, one unexpectedly becomes aware of the world they embody that lies beyond: one of the distant mountains, the sky, and the universal cosmic realm that its fragments reflect. Slowly, one is absorbed within another sphere of existence, that of the timeless and ahistoric, until fundamental truths not otherwise encountered are glimpsed. In the final lines of his poem, as T'ao is suddenly engulfed by the ineffable beauty of simple existence in nature, he creates images of the experience of gardens and flowers that rest at the heart of the subject in the centuries following.

We must introduce this poet, the greatest of his age, although the official, government history of the Six Dynasties classified him as a hermit, not a poet. He lived in a time politically memorable for its incessant “palace revolutions, peasant revolts, banditry, civil war, assassination, and regicide” (HIGHTOWER, 1970, p. 2). For many years, to support his family, he worked as secretary to several of the generals who were trying to kill each other; for a time, he was a magistrate in nearby P'eng-tse. His recollection of these years is bitter: “My instinct is all for freedom and will not brook discipline or restraint. Hunger and cold may be sharp, but this going against myself really sickens me. Whenever I have been involved in official life I was mortgaging myself to my mouth and belly, and the realization of this greatly upset me. I was deeply ashamed that I had so compromised my principles” (HIGHTOWER, 1970, p. 3). He chose finally, in 405, at the age of forty, to leave that life and, despite the difficulties the choice promised, to support his family as a farmer. This he did, through famine, fires, and untold pressures, until his death twenty-two years later. From the five willow trees in front of his house, he called himself Mr. Five Willows; and in his autobiography he tells us that he tended his gardens, read books, drank wine when he could afford it, and wrote poetry. In his epitaph, which he wrote near the time

of his death, he recalled the simplicity of his life, the passing seasons working in the fields, and his constant poverty, ending with these words: "Raise me no mound, plant me no grove; time will pass with the revolving sun and moon. I never cared for praise in my lifetime, and it matters not at all what eulogies are sung after my death. Man's life is hard enough in truth; and death is not to be avoided" (HIGHTOWER, 1970, p. 6).

With his great poem *Home Again!* (*Kuei-ch'ü-lai ts'e*), written in 405 after his last frustrating attempt at office, T'ao established forever the ideal of the home and garden as a personal retreat, haven, paradise, and world apart. It has ever since been regarded as the lyrical manifesto of the life of hermitage:

*My boat rocks in the gentle breeze
Flap, flap, the wind blows my gown;
I ask a passerby about the road ahead,
Grudging the dimness of the light at dawn.
Then I catch sight of my cottage—
Filled with joy I run.
The servant boy comes to welcome me
My little son waits at the door.
The three paths are almost obliterated
But pines and chrysanthemums are still here.
Leading the children by the hand I enter my house
Where there is a bottle filled with wine.
I draw the bottle to me and pour myself a cup;
Seeing the trees in the courtyard brings joy to my face.
I lean on the south window and let my pride expand,
I consider how easy it is to be content with a little space.
Every day I stroll in my garden for pleasure,
There is a gate there, but it is always shut.
Cane in hand I walk and rest
Occasionally raising my head to gaze into the distance.
The clouds aimlessly arise from the peaks.
The birds, weary of flying, know it is time to come home.
As the sun's rays grow dim and disappear from view
I walk around a lonely pine tree, stroking it.

Back home again!
May my friendships be broken off and my wanderings come
to an end.
The world and I shall have nothing more to do with one
another. . . .*

(HIGHTOWER, 1970, p. 269)

The locus classicus of the ideal of the garden as timeless paradise is T'ao's story "The Peach Blossom Spring," a brief fable that brings together the magic grotto, blossoming peach trees, and a paradise on the other side of a mountain, where people live simply and honestly, unaware that several dynasties have passed since they last had any notion of time save that of nature. The ideal evoked strongly recalls T'ao's own life.

A fisherman from Wu-ling was boating along a stream one day, "unconscious of the distance he had traveled," when he saw a dense grove of blossoming peach trees "lining each bank for hundreds of paces. No tree of any other kind stood among them, but there were fragrant flowers, delicate and lovely to the eye, and the air was filled with drifting peachbloom." The fisherman, in amazement, stopped to investigate, and discovered a spring at the end of the grove, and a cave into a hill from which faint light seemed to emanate. When he passed through the cave, he emerged "into the open light of day. He faced a spread of level land. Imposing buildings stood among rich fields and pleasant ponds all set with mulberry and willow, linking paths led everywhere, and the fowls and dogs of one farm could be heard from the next. People were coming and going and working in the fields . . . White-haired elders and tufted children alike were cheerful and contented" (CYRIL BIRCH, 1967, pp. 167-168).

Intending to return again, the fisherman left after a few days, but of course could never find his way back. T'ao's story supplies notable analogies with the experience of the garden. There is first a suspension of time and space. The fisherman becomes unconscious of the distance he has traveled and of his location. He first sees, then smells the fragrance of blossoming peach trees. He passes through a grotto, crossing another sphere of time and space, into a land where worldly time has stopped.

The Peach Blossom Spring instantly entered the popular imagination, becoming a favorite subject of poets and painters thereafter. The fable endures always as the promise of the garden: the secluded world apart from this world, the beauty and fragrance of flowers, the suspension of all time and space except for the patterns of nature.

The first of two versions of the subject in this exhibition (No. 1) was painted in 1646, 1219 years after the death of T'ao Ch'ien and two years after the Manchu conquest of China. The artist, Fan Ch'i (1616-after 1694), was staying at that time at the Monastery of Pure Coolness in Nanking. It is the penultimate leaf in a small album of idyllic scenes of garden retreats and mountain hideaways. Placed toward the end of this sequence of images, it served as a final revelation of the true theme for which all else had been preparation—the meaning of the Chinese garden.

The Gardens of Southern Sung Painting

THE MOST CELEBRATED and influential gardens in the history of Chinese painting were the Wang-ch'uan Villa of Wang Wei, built in the middle of the eighth century, and the Lung-mien Mountain Villa of Li Kung-lin, built in the late eleventh century (fig. 1). Only copies of the original paintings exist today, but together with textual records they allow us to describe the essential character of the prototypical scholar's garden of the T'ang and Sung periods.

There is first an "estate"—a piece of land, usually wild or abandoned, and generally useless in terms of produce or income. On it one builds a house—a cottage, hut, or thatched cabin (*ts'ao-t'ang*). As money permits, additional structures may be built: pavilions overlooking attractive views; studies for painting, poetry, and calligraphy; bridges and pathways joining scenic areas and creating the route by which one comes to see and know this world. If there are streams, waterfalls, ancient trees, strange rocks, or high hills, they will provide the natural structure and focal points of the garden. In any case, the gardener will contribute appropriate saplings, shrubs, bamboo, flowers, and herbs, thereby joining the process of universal life: "He who plants a pine will never grow old,/Will forever



Fig. 1. Lung-mien Mountain Villa. After Li Kung-lin (ca. 1040–1106); section of handscroll, ink and color on silk; Berenson Collection, I Tatti, Settignano, Italy

walk the earth as an immortal," said the fifteenth-century painter Shen Chou (1966, p. 326). Although the pursuit of eternity through intimate association with nature is a universal phenomenon, it is celebrated with particular eloquence in the poetry, painting, and gardens of China.

To enter these garden estates was to be conscious of entering a world apart, a notion that implied not only departure from the world of social, political, and familial structure, but also the achievement of a transformed state. One "enters the world of dreams" or "enters the land of drunkenness" as one enters the world of a painting, a temple, or a garden. The boundaries of these worlds must be clearly marked, and the state of transformation evident. The grotto opening into the earth or the garden's moon gate—each offers passage, and just as the cave winds through the mountain, so the curving pathway from the gate meanders more and more deeply into the private precinct until, in mind if not in body, one is in paradise. Gradual entrance into paradise, according to the painter Ku K'ai-chih, is preferable to arriving too quickly. And so, there may be many boundaries to cross; even if the garden is a single small court, one does not enter it directly but through paths, gates, and pavilions. China is noted as a land of walls within walls: from the Great Wall marking national boundaries to the massive walls surrounding cities, from walls enclosing family compounds to the walls surrounding the private garden. Walls mark the lines that define and contain nation, emperor, city, society, family, and individual. The garden wall is the final boundary, and only within it does the self find release. That is the point of the garden. The seventeenth-century scholar Chi Ch'eng, author of *Yüan-yeh*, the most detailed and important treatise on garden design, describes the overriding goal of garden building as the creation of a precinct within which freedom can be attained: "Happiness consists in enjoying one's freedom. He who can do this is indeed an immortal" (OSVALD SIRÉN, 1949, p. 16).

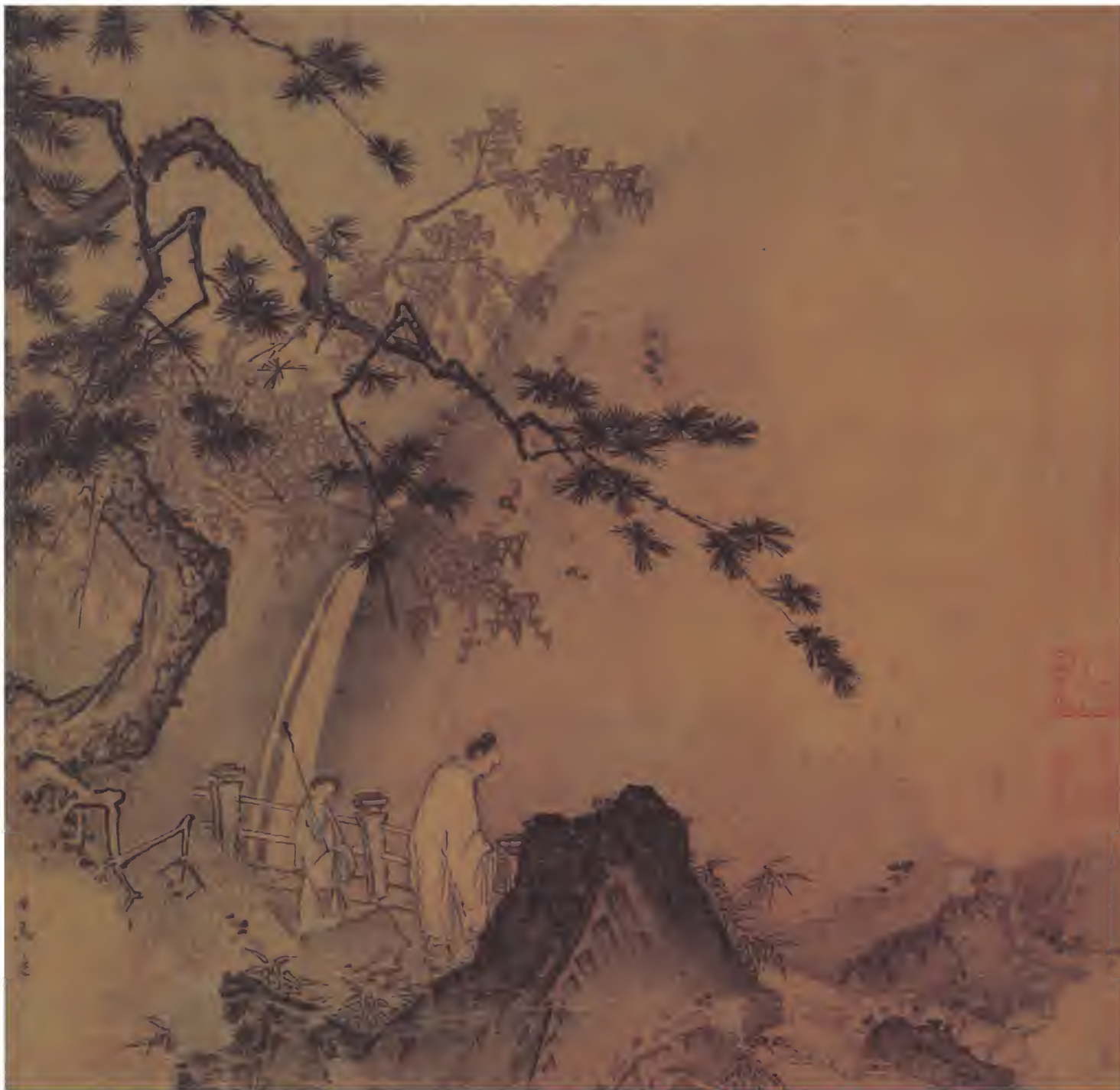
The four album leaves that illustrate garden imagery in the Sung dynasty are all products of the Southern Sung Imperial Painting Academy, dating from about 1150 to 1250. These "gardens" of Southern Sung are formed of the natural scenery of Hangchow and its West Lake, highlighted by an opportunely placed pavilion looking out over a broad valley (No. 2), by a colorful railing above a stream (No. 3), by a few plum trees planted high in the mountains (No. 4), or simply by a boat adrift near a willow bank (No. 5).

The formal principles of composition are similar in gardens and paintings: much or most of the space is given over to the emptiness of sky, water, mountain, or white walls and paving stones. Individual trees or rocks, in small coherent clusters, are highlighted against this expanse. Underlying the images are structural patterns of thought that have been called "complementary bipolarity" and "multiple periodicity" (PLAKS, 1976, pp. 43-53). By the former is meant the propensity to perceive an opposite phenomenon within its obverse: emptiness in fullness, stillness in movement, softness in hardness; the latter denotes a concept of time that sees the moment in necessary relationship to all time, as though one year's cycle of seasons constituted an inseparable whole that is in turn inseparable from time past and time to come.

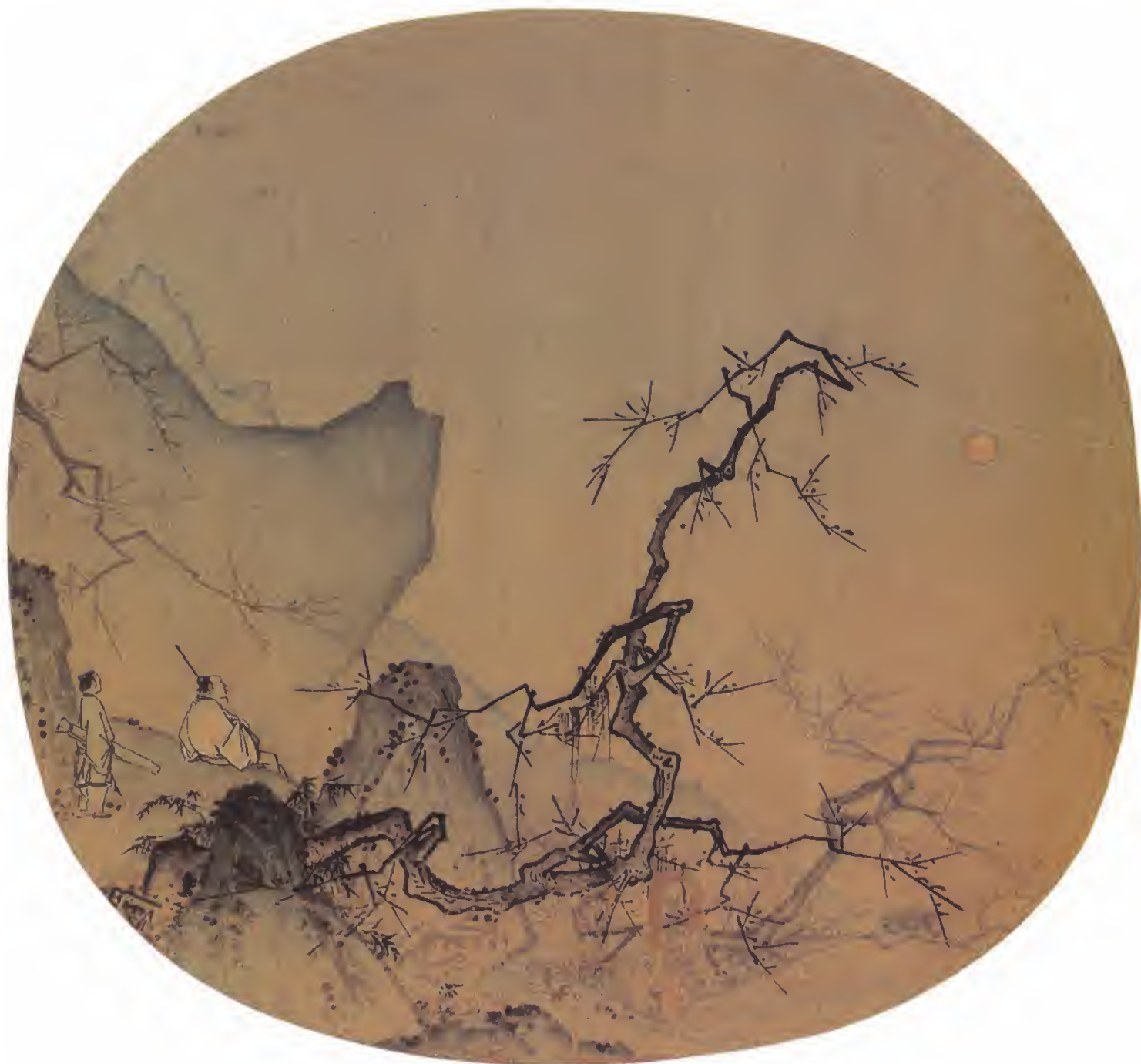
There is a striking similarity between the structure and expressive effects of Southern Sung painting and the structure and expression of T'ang poetry. Both relate closely to the aesthetic system that underlies the Chinese garden. The



No. 2. **Evening in Spring Hills.** *Anonymous artist (Southern Sung); album leaf, ink and color on silk; Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.*



No. 3. **Scholar by a Waterfall.** *Ma Yüan* (active ca. 1190–1225); album leaf, ink and light color on silk; Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.9



No. 4. **Plum Blossoms by Moonlight.** *Ma Yüan* (active ca. 1190–1225); album leaf, ink and color on silk; Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.; L.1981.126.12

most rigorous form of T'ang poetry is the *chiieh-chü*, or quatrain. Each of its four lines has an essential suggestive or descriptive purpose, and within every line the five or seven syllables must follow a prescribed tonal and rhyme pattern. We may consider the example of Wang Wei's "In the Hills":

*White rocks jutting from Ching stream
The weather's cold, red leaves few
No rain at all on the paths in the hill
Clothes are wet with the blue air.*

(G. W. ROBINSON, 1973, p. 86)

Like a verbal picture, the first two lines paint the scene: white rocks in a stream, just a few red leaves left on the chilled trees. The next two lines suggest the poet's situation: walking the hilly path by the stream, his clothes dampened by the blue mists of autumn and the spray from the brook. There are only a few images here, but they are sharp and cold.

The small round or rectangular format of the Southern Sung painting is equivalent in scope to the four lines of the *chiieh-chü*. The quatrain form was abstracted from the longer *lu-shih*, or regulated verse form, just as the album leaf was a miniaturization from the larger hanging-scroll or handscroll format. In fact, the garden itself was created from the imperial park or garden, as a miniature model of the universe. Musical tone and rhyme in the poetry are equivalent to color and tone in painting, and to the interplay of arcs and angles. The compositional structure of the pictures, always concentrating on no more than four or five elements, corresponds to the use of four poetic lines and the spare imagery of T'ang poetry. Thus, if one has entered into the mood and structure of a painting like the anonymous *Boating by a Willow Bank* (No. 5), one is drawn to describe it in terms that recall the T'ang quatrain:

*Willows still by lotus bank,
A boat drifts slowly by.
Ahead, tall grass, blue distant hills,
White moon in golden sky.*

The deliberately limited, yet eloquent vocabulary of T'ang poetry is well known, as is its spare and effective imagery. But equally remarkable is the similar form and function of Southern Sung painting, patterned closely upon the T'ang quatrain—that art form which, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was surely the most artful and vivid mode of personal and philosophical expression.

Our examples crystallize in their terse, suggestive forms not only the structure of garden design in China, but the aesthetic and the mood of quiet contemplation most sympathetic to designers of gardens and to the poets who have immortalized them. They are visualizations of concepts of complementary bipolarity. For example, in *Scholar by a Waterfall* by Ma Yüan (active ca. 1190–1225), stillness within movement is embodied in the meditating figure of the poet, as he gazes into the rushing stream, within a vortex of the moving elements of water, mist, and jutting pine (No. 3). *Boating by a Willow Bank* seems to suggest just the opposite relationship, movement within stillness: a quiet, moonlit night; the still pond; and, moving out over the pond, a lone boat, the sole element of motion in its surrounding. Similarly, in the anonymous *Evening in Spring Hills*



No. 5. **Boating by a Willow Bank.** *Anonymous artist (Southern Song); album leaf, ink and color on silk; Fletcher Fund, 1947; 47.18.137*

(No. 2), we might sense the image or suggestion of sound within silence. The painting shares the mood of Wang Wei's poem "Birds Calling in the Valley":

Men at rest, cassia flowers falling
Night still, spring hills empty
The moon rises, rousing birds in the hills
Sometimes they cry in the spring valley

(G. W. ROBINSON, 1973, p. 55)

Within the quiet circle of the fan the sense of stillness and silence is almost tangible, primarily because of the huge expanse of twilight sky dominating the composition. From such silence the distant song of birds could arise; certainly, *some* sounds of the evening are implied in the figure of the scholar, with a young attendant, in the pavilion. But also conveying this impression is the duality of our vision, as it is manipulated by the painter: we are drawn at once up toward the sky and its tiny moon, and down in the direction of the valley that falls away below. Not only does this perspective attract us to both the moon in the sky and the spring valley far below, and thus give subtle emphasis to the interplay between rising moon and startled birds in the valley, but it also adumbrates another aesthetic bipolarity, the formal interaction of oppositions, such as rising and falling.

Formal principles of design are counterparts of the thematic pairs just considered. All, of course, are functions of the primary complementary bipolarity, yin and yang. Consider the example of closing and opening in *Boating by a Willow Bank*. The boat emerges, opens out from the shadowed shore grown with willows, entering upon the moonlit water; it passes, in other words, from enclosure into openness. The characteristic entrance into a Chinese garden is also a demonstration of the closing-opening duality: along winding paths, around screens, through pavilions, indirectly and obscurely, until one is suddenly in the open spaces of the garden. The interplay between empty and full is illustrated in all of our examples by the interaction among solid forms and void space. Regular and irregular, an idea that might also be termed "asymmetric balance," is embodied in the three pictures by the almost uncanny ability of the artists to effect a strong and controlling central point or weight of gravity, despite their dramatic utilization of jagged and sharply irregular individual elements.

Although these aesthetic formal principles could be easily demonstrated with almost any example of Chinese calligraphy or with almost any Chinese garden, nowhere else in Chinese painting are they utilized so consistently and, I believe, so deliberately as in the art of the Southern Sung Academy. While they subsist in later painting, they are more diffuse, modified in various ways by other concerns.

Emperor Hui-tsung and Flower and Bird Painting in the Sung Dynasty

WERE WE TO TRACE it back through time to the haunted cranes of Ch'u and the sacred lotus of Shakymuni Buddha, the genre of flower and bird painting (*hua-niao hua*) would have a long history indeed. But the genre was not given a name until the eleventh century, and the artists who first established its significance were primarily active in the tenth century—above all, Huang Ch'üan (903–968) of Shu (Szechwan) and Hsü Hsi (died before 975) of Chin-ling (Nanking).

Huang, together with his sons, brother, nephews, grandsons, and followers, created a style of precise, accurate realism and colorful presentation that became the standard of the Sung dynasty and of the Academy for over a century, constituting a kind of national art. Individual paintings by both Huang Ch'üan and his son Huang Chü-ts'ai (933–after 993) exist today; for example, the latter's *Pheasant, Sparrows, and Brambles* is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 2). The technique consists of careful, fine-line drawings of outlines then given shading and color. Birds, plants, and rocks are realistic and colorful, and the setting is one of secluded sanctuary. Although motion is depicted, especially in the sparrows, the image is rather motionless and studied, like a frozen vignette.

This standard technique was described as “outlining and filling in with color.” A variation of the technique, when color obscured the line or was applied directly without line, was called the “boneless style.” This liquid, colorful, and sensuous manner evolved among followers of Huang Ch'üan, and remained popular through later periods (see especially Yün Shou-p'ing's works, Nos. 30–34).

The equally important and influential art of Hsü Hsi, the greatest rival of the Huangs, remains mysterious. No securely documented picture by him exists. There is, however, one large, dark hanging scroll in the Shanghai Museum (fig. 3), depicting broken bamboo and snow-covered rocks as if they were cosmic symbols of eternity. The images are so compelling, the painting so utterly distinctive in technique, and the scroll so mysterious itself that its attribution to the nearly legendary Hsü Hsi has at least a certain poetic plausibility. It is painted almost without line, using instead subtly graded washes of ink that define, shade, and model the forms of leaves, trunk, stalks, branches, and rocks as if there were indeed “no traces of the brush.” Realism is here given its most powerful definition in all of Chinese painting. Unforgettable too is the wintry mood, the expression of toughness and struggle, that seems to harmonize with the ubiquitous early description of Hsü Hsi's art as wild and free—in deliberate contrast to the wealthy, aristocratic art of the Huangs.

In the canonical contrast drawn by critics between the art of the two camps was also focused the distinction between paintings that convey meanings (*hsieh-i*)



Fig. 2. **Pheasant, Sparrows, and Brambles.** Huang Chü-ts'ai (933-after 993); hanging scroll, ink and color on silk; National Palace Museum, Taipei



Fig. 3. **Bamboo in Snow.** Anonymous artist (Sung²); hanging scroll, ink and slight color on silk; Shanghai Museum



Fig. 4. **Magpies and Hare,** dated 1061. Ts'ui Po (active mid-11th c.); hanging scroll, ink and color on silk; National Palace Museum, Taipei

and those that primarily convey realistic forms (*hsieh-sheng*). Although the distinctions generally drawn are overly sharp, these ideas underlie the two pictures we have selected to represent the art of the Huangs and Hsü Hsi. Realism is not the issue: they are equally realistic, both revealing the most painstaking observation. *Pheasant, Sparrows, and Brambles*, however, conveys the activities of birds by a pond. If meanings within or beyond the forms are implied, they would be meanings of nearly random observation—the implication perhaps of the wild inviolability of the birds in their natural habitat, to mention one possibility. Within the formal structure of the picture moreover are implications of space and time, conforming to a sense of place and the order of the world.

In contrast, *Bamboo in Snow* has virtually no color. The gradual tendency of Chinese painters to prefer ink and ink wash over bright colors is focused in the controversy over *hsieh-i* and *hsieh-sheng*, and in the development of moralistic landscape painting. Beyond its rejection of color, the painting seems inexorably to demand us to consider both the choice and meaning of its subject and its manner of presentation. In other words, the elements of the picture seem to be symbols whose meanings are heightened by the dramatic, monumental composition and the absence of color. A pheasant may symbolize rustic freedom; snow-covered broken bamboo and rocks represent human life and the life of the earth at a most profound level. Recognition of *hsieh-i* grows from the need to ask why a subject was chosen and what it means. If the answers go beyond surfaces and colors to purposes, processes, and moral philosophy, then we may consider that the work exemplifies the idea of *hsieh-i*, conveying meanings, however realistic

it may be. In time, unfortunately, this distinction became blurred, and the two concepts came to mean little more than “realistic” and “sketchy.” Continual reference to the original distinction between meanings and description may reveal their constant interplay in a wide variety of paintings, and the overriding significance that the idea of *hsieh-i* held for the greatest artists.

Some statistical information about the popularity of flower and bird painting during the Sung period can be gleaned from the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, a catalogue of the Sung government art collection, dated 1120. The catalogue records a total of 6387 paintings of all subjects by 231 artists. Of the 231, forty-six were classified as specialists in flower and bird painting—the earliest secure definition of the genre as such. Eight of the painters were T'ang men, eight active in the Five Dynasties, and thirty in the Sung (although several of the latter, including Huang Ch'üan and Hsü Hsi, would be more properly classed in the Five Dynasties). According to the unknown authors of the catalogue, the genre was born in the T'ang dynasty (618–908), reaching its first apogee in the tenth century, and a second in the late eleventh. In 1120, 2776 flower and bird paintings were owned by the Sung government. This collection constituted more than twice the number of the next largest genre, religious painting, as the following tabulation by subject indicates:

BUDDHIST AND TAOIST SUBJECTS	1180
SECULAR FIGURE PAINTING	505
PALACES AND ARCHITECTURE	71
BARBARIAN TRIBES	133
DRAGONS AND FISH	117
LANDSCAPE	1108
DOMESTIC ANIMALS	324
FLOWERS AND BIRDS	2776
INK BAMBOO	148
VEGETABLES AND FRUIT	25

Even allowing the need for colorful, decorative pictures in the furnishing of palatial halls, this huge numerical superiority also testifies to the enormous popularity of flower and bird painting in the Sung period.

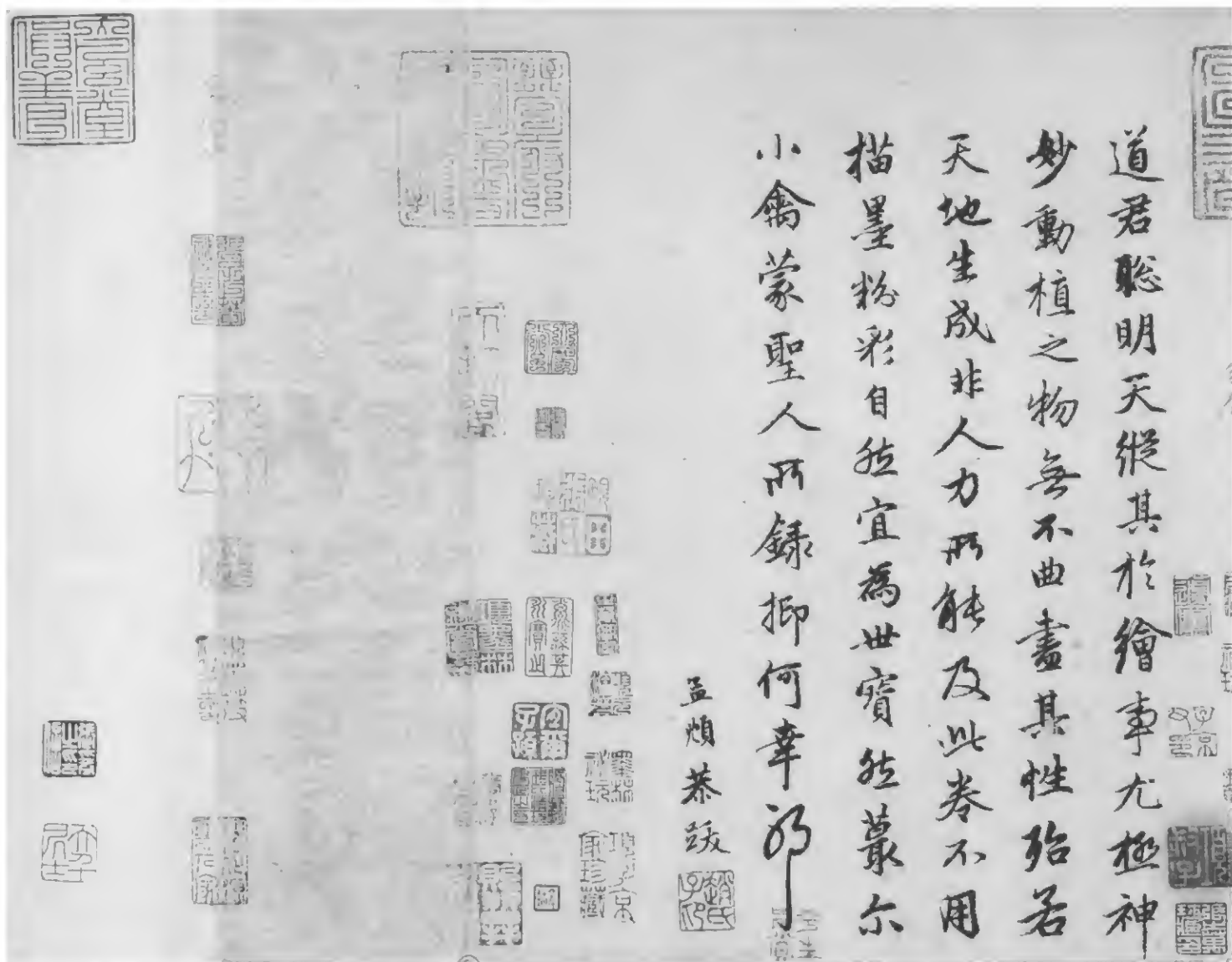
Emphasis in the collection, judging by numbers of recorded works by individual painters, had two points of gravity: first, in the works of Huang Ch'üan (349 paintings), Huang Chü-ts'ai (332), and Hsü Hsi (249) in the tenth century; and, second, in the works of Ts'ui Po (241), I Yüan-chi (245), and Wu Yüan-yü (189) in the second half of the eleventh century. Again, we are fortunate to have works by Ts'ui Po and I Yüan-chi, and comparison of Ts'ui's *Magpies and Hare* (fig. 4) with Huang Chü-ts'ai's *Pheasant, Sparrows, and Brambles* will illustrate some of the ways the genre changed during the century intervening between them. There is a far greater sense of movement and internal life in Ts'ui Po's picture: a physical interaction among elements, especially between the birds and the rabbit, that is not seen in Huang's picture; a more plastic and richer definition of forms; and an occasional looseness of technique, as in the earth and rocks, that adds to the sense of vitality and motion overall.

Finches and Bamboo (No. 6), the earliest painting in the exhibition, follows directly upon Ts'ui's achievement, and is deeply indebted to it. Painted by the



No. 6. Finches and Bamboo. Emperor Hui-tsung (1082-1135); handscroll, ink and color on silk; John M. Crawford, Jr., Collection; Purchase, Douglas Dillon Gift, 1981; 1981.278





No. 6. *Finches and Bamboo*. Detail, colophon by Chao Meng-fu (1254-1322)

emperor Hui-tsung (1082-1135) during the Hsüan-ho era, 1119-1125, it bears the emperor's cipher and seal, and a seal of record reading *Hsüan-ho* placed over the margin between painting and mounting to the right. Hui-tsung's reformation of the Imperial Painting Academy during these years inaugurates the era of the Academy's greatest achievement and highest position, extending through the Southern Sung period (1127-1279). Like nearly every painting from this organization in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, *Finches and Bamboo* may seem less the creation of a distinct individual than of a distinctive institution. From the beginning of Hui-tsung's reforms in 1104 until the end of the dynasty in 1279, the Academy was the focus of a concerted school of painting, with a fixed curriculum of instruction and training; bureaucratically defined standards, ranks, and salaries; and a tradition of study of the past and study from life that changed only by very small accretions.

Hui-tsung insisted upon absolute realism. He also demanded subtlety and suggestiveness in imagery, rewarding those who most effectively captured the "idea" of a subject rather than merely its correct representation. Presentation and representation were equally at issue, as the emperor sought to create a syn-

thesis of realism and meanings, *hsieh-sheng* and *hsieh-i*. Consider *Finches and Bamboo*. The season is early spring. Ferns and pebbles protrude from a softly modeled, worn earthen overhang to the right. Three bamboo shoots jut out to the left: one older, broken, but beginning to send out new growth; the other two growing horizontally from the bank. Behind the drooping, colorless ferns appear pale green young leaves, and new growth is beginning at the base of the leafless branches above. A male finch and the female above him perch on pliant bamboo stalks, their forms, color, and feathery texture conveyed in the most subtle and delicate techniques of brushwork. The male preens and stretches upward toward the female, who pretends to be fascinated by something in the distance. A dot of black lacquer highlights each eye, lending a delightful glitter and spark to the lifelike images of the birds.

There are six elements in the picture: birds, bamboo, ferns, pebbles, earthen overhang, and barren branches. Selecting these six was part of the craft of the painter; defining them so beautifully followed careful study from life. The gentle and ironic interaction between the birds would have been learned from such innovative masters as Ts'ui Po. This craft of composition is a hallmark of the greatest Sung academic masters alone. Certain principles of their craft deserve notice. First, the interplay between solid and void areas is in a fine balance: earthen pebbled bank to the right balanced by a mirror reverse void to the left. Between is a latticelike complex of branches, leaves, and birds, interweaving forms and space. In addition, the extension of horizontality is maintained by a similar balance among rising, falling, and left-extending elements. Each of the two main bamboo stalks manages to maintain precarious stabilities among the female bird on her apparently swaying perch, the upward-stretching male, and the dense cluster of leaves below him.

Like a poet the Sung artist composes his subject, finches and bamboo. A few carefully selected details give us the season and a place. From the expert representation we enjoy the beauty and charm of the birds, the lush green of the bamboo. Then he leads us to notice almost human personalities in the male and female birds—they are courting, and this is a poem of springtime and of love. Then, as we become aware of the mysterious and subtle interplay of rising and falling, empty and full, still and moving, dead and living—of yin and yang—we are led finally to participate in a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding life. The painting reveals the belief that in the smallest and least significant details of life there is a cosmic pattern. From the finches, from the bamboo, from time, light, and season, within the garden, we can know the universe.

This comprehensive vision is not the attainment of all Sung artists, of course, but only of the greatest of them. Required, in addition to great skill, is a quality of mind that perceives meanings in phenomena. The typical academic artist more often achieves a delightful semblance of miniature reality, as exemplified by two anonymous paintings in the exhibition, *Sparrows, Bamboo, and Plum Blossoms* (No. 7) and *Bird on a Loquat Tree* (No. 8). Studying these garden microcosms we easily come to appreciate the sensuous surfaces of rich green leaves, orange fruit, pink and white plum blossoms, and the soft feathery plumpness of the birds. The small green bird in No. 8 is frozen in a position of tense poise verging on imbalance: he is about to leap forward and seize the small bug scurrying along a loquat directly in front of his beak. In No. 7, the rightmost sparrow in swift



No. 7. Sparrows, Bamboo, and Plum Blossoms. Anonymous artist (Southern Sung); round fan mounted as album leaf, ink and color on silk; Bequest of Mary Clark Thompson, 1923; 24.80.487



No. 8. **Bird on a Loquat Tree.** *Anonymous artist (Southern Sung); album leaf, ink and color on silk; John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913; 13.100.99*



No. 9. **Orchid.** *Ma Lin* (active 1216–1255); album leaf, ink and color on silk; Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.10

motion pursues another bug under the branch upon which he is perched. Flowers, fruit, bamboo, birds, and bugs compose these visions of the garden in spring and summer. The common denominators of Southern Sung academic flower and bird painting, judging from such works as these, are careful realism; studied, selective presentation; and genuine affection lavished upon the small and colorful things of the garden.

Ma Lin's *Orchid* (No. 9), like Hui-tsung's *Finches and Bamboo*, is a masterpiece of the genre. Four leaves in deep green and five pink orchid blossoms on a single stalk form an image of ethereality—an epiphany of the beauty of the garden. The blossoms are painted with the utmost descriptive nuance, their soft, tender, drooping fragility conveyed in pale pink, as they seem to rise and drift in a breeze over the silk. The sharp, flat, almost black leaves below emphasize by contrast the qualities of the flowers.

If anyone bothered to write anything about Ma Lin (active 1216–1255) during his lifetime, it has yet to be discovered. Only after the end of the Sung dynasty do we learn that he was the last of the great Ma family of court painters spanning five generations. His father was Ma Yüan (see above, Nos. 3, 4). Ma Lin may have died on the eve of the Mongol invasion of China. His art, the essence of Southern Sung, is preoccupied with process, with becoming and ending. Twilight, autumn foliage, candles in the night, geese in the evening sky, flowers at the apogee of their blossoming, scattered fragrance—these were his subjects.

The orchid in China is an autumnal flower and because it grows naturally in inaccessible areas, is regarded as a symbol of unappreciated virtue and beauty. Ch'ü Yüan, author of *Songs of the South*, admired the orchid above all other flowers, and its association with him has lent the flower the additional—and ultimately primary—symbolic meaning of loyalty. In the Southern Sung period, however, the orchid, like most other flowers, personifies female beauty, usually that of courtesans and neglected palace women. If, there, we read Ma Lin's *Orchid* as an elegy, it is not only because the artist was a poet of the transient, himself the last of five generations of artists, but because the orchid itself evokes autumn melancholy, regret, and loneliness. In this painting, as in all of his works, Ma seems to capture and hold a moment of time just as the poet Li Ch'ing-chao held it in her mind:

*Still: I feel the fallen petals;
still: I touch their lingering scent;
still: I hold onto a moment of time.*

(EUGENE EOYANG, 1975, p. 371)



No. 10. *Narcissus*. Chao Meng-chien (1199–1264);
handscroll, ink on paper; Gift of The Dillon Fund,
1973; 1973.120.4; Detail

Ch'ien Hsüan and the Memory of Lost Gardens

BEGINNING IN THE SUNG period and reaching fruition in the writings of the Ming philosopher Wang Yang-ming (1472–1528), a new philosophy of mind gradually evolved, and with it, the belief that the individual mind has locked in it the pattern of universal meaning. Surfaces and things imperfectly embody these meanings; there is much that cannot be seen, known, or conveyed through appearances. In the new art that was created during this period, nature's deeper patterns emerge, as sensuous surfaces recede; the new aesthetic of *p'ing-tan*, "placid paleness," replaces the colorful sensuality of Sung; and the impression of the individual mind embodied in the structure of art becomes a new ideal.

The *Narcissus* (No. 10) of Chao Meng-chien (1199–1264), a twelve-foot-long handscroll, was painted at approximately the same time as Ma Lin's *Orchid*, and both Chao and Ma were intimately associated with the Sung imperial family. Their paintings come from different worlds, however, and represent irreconcilable differences of purpose and meaning. Ma Lin portrays the orchid in all of its delicate beauty of color and form; like a poet he presents it to us, isolated, as an image of exquisite subtlety. Evoking the beauty of flowers and of women, it embodies sensuality and arouses the thoughts and emotions associated with sensual enjoyment: their brief existence, their pleasures, their passing.

Chao Meng-chien, in contrast, uses no color, only ink and ink wash. His image has no focus; it extends without beginning or end over the twelve feet of the scroll. Rhythmic curves in wavelike patterns lift the pale blossoms above them, so they become like birds drifting above the clouds, or "goddesses floating above the waves," as a common name for the narcissus can be translated. The painter is as concerned for the ideational image of the phenomenon as for its obvious form. While we easily recognize the flower, we also see that it is not described in the way Ma's orchid is. Instead of careful outlines as if drawn from life, Chao employs sweeping curves of ink wash that simulate the motion of the stalks and leaves of the plant. His blossoms, drawn according to a few simple rules repeated over and over, capture the idea of the flower without imitating it. Round stalks, flat curving leaves, and blossoms in profusion combine to create a silvery *equivalent* of the dense green, yellow, and white field of daffodils in the breeze.

Such embodiment of ideas and structural principles in graphic form is obviously very different from the realism of the Sung court. Like most scholar-painters before and after him, Chao said that he "was after something beyond form-likeness" (CHU-TSING LI, 1976a, p. 6); he speaks of "pure resonance" and "clear composition" (KWAN S. WONG, 1981, p. 52). He was preoccupied with both precise techniques and correct traditions. He was, in fact, quite dogmatic about

correctness, and we might sense in his art a tension of the kind that seems to afflict artists imprisoned within the expectations of a narrow, privileged elite.

At an opposite extreme was an artist like Mu-ch'i, painter of *Hibiscus in Rain* (fig. 5), who evenhandedly offended the scholarly elite and imperial officialdom alike. His art is one of swift execution, spontaneous technique, simplicity of vision, and freedom from orthodoxy. Whatever he painted, from chestnuts to sacred bodhisattvas, attained a freedom and originality that no other artist of the thirteenth century could approach.

The political spectrum of art in this critical age thus embraced a wide range, with the Academy in the center, the tightly conservative literati to the right, and the uncontrollable individualists like Mu-ch'i on the left fringe. With the failure of the Sung government to withstand the Mongol onslaught in the 1270s, both the center, lackeys of a morally bankrupt court, and the left, smelly monks and disreputable outcasts, received the censure of the keepers of the flame of morality. History, as someone said, is written by the victors—not, however, in this case by the Mongols, but by such connoisseurs of good taste as Chuang Su, who dismissed both the Academy and the monks as failing to manifest morality in their art. This newly necessary component was found instead in Chao Mengchien's *Narcissus*.



Fig. 5. *Hibiscus in Rain*. Mu-ch'i (mid-13th c.); section of handscroll(?) mounted as hanging scroll, ink on paper; Daitokuji, Kyoto

Soon after the Mongol conquest, the scroll came into the hands of a group of *i-min*, “leftover people” of the Sung dynasty, including the poets Chou Mi and Ch’iu Yüan. Their colophons reflect a new mentality, and a new reading of the capacity of painting to convey meaning. For Chou Mi, Chao Meng-chien’s flowers represent pure fragrance; in his poem to the tune *Kuo-hsiang man*, they have become an icon:

*White jade luster and golden brightness:
I remember the folding screen [of flowers] beside the low
table,
The leaves close-cropped, the roots repotted,
Each year we met again,
A slender shadowlike beauty,
In disarray from the rain around her waist and the wind
at her lapels.
She moved like a cold cloud
As birdcalls announced the spring.
Our meetings then were in Loyang.
Over the orange powder on her whitened cheeks
The fairy closed her hand and the frost crystals formed.
Such regret!
The flowers, the nation’s fragrance, fall and drift away.
The ice melts and the leaves are like pale-colored eyebrows.
Who remembers a hairpin left behind?
In the empty water the heavens are so far away
. . .
The vastness of the water exhausts my gaze.
Fifty lute strings
Fill with sadness the clouds above the Hsiang River.
In the crisp cold I feel silent grief.
I dream that the east wind comes,
That the snow is gone, and the river clear.*

(JONATHAN HAY)

Ch’iu Yüan, in his poem following Chou Mi’s, writes similarly of the narcissus as an image of China smashed and ruined, but holding still in memory an undying purity and perfection. There are tears in things, Vergil said; once painting can be seen to have the capacity to embody the grief of a nation, and a flower to be the tears of men, there can be no returning to the simple beauty of another time. Ideals more noble than those of feminine beauty and sensual pleasure, as embodied in the lovely art of Ma Lin, prevailed.

Within this *i-min* group, the painter who first found a way to preserve sensual beauty while investing painting with morality sufficiently lofty to command respect was Ch’ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–after 1301). In his hands, meaning and memory were subtly interwoven, and beauty itself received new definition.

Ch’ien’s *Pear Blossoms* (No. 11) returns to the precise delineation and delicate color of Ma Lin, but not exactly. The colors are subdued, limited primarily to the warm umber of the paper surface and a deeper brown green in the leaves,



black in the branches, and white in the flowers. Shading is only a smoky charcoal on some of the leaves. The contour lines are plain and unassertive. There is no illusion here; rather, a memory, pale and distant. The painter's poem, to the left, echoes the mood:

*All alone by the veranda railing, her teardrops drench the
branches,
Her face is unadorned, but her old beauty remains.
Behind the locked gate, on a rainy night, how she is filled
with sadness,
How differently she looked bathed in golden waves of moon-
light, before the darkness fell.*

(WEN FONG AND MAXWELL K. HEARN, 1982, p. 36; modified)

With the same careful irony in painting and poem, Ch'ien plays upon traditional imagery and symbolism, evoking a court beauty, abandoned and aging, weeping by a veranda. Now, dramatically, the beauty is Sung China, behind a locked gate, in darkness and rain—China in a Mongol prison. Once, like Ma Lin's *Orchid*, she was "bathed in waves of golden moonlight." Darkly remembered is all that is gone; distance and transformation intervene. One may see the pear blossoms, one may paint them, but all that they have ever meant has vanished.

Time, in Ch'ien Hsüan's art, is of a complexity from which we are perhaps too far to understand fully. Let us suppose that every artist embodies his own time; Ch'ien Hsüan surely did. His drunkenness, loyalty to the Sung, profound learning (he was an accomplished scholar who obliterated nearly every trace of his work), and exquisite art are grounded somehow in the concrete physicality of his time and place. His pear blossoms may have emerged in his garden, but he suggests in picture and poem that they are of a time long past. Nearly all of his subjects are drawn from the distant past. So consistent are they, however, in the ideals they mourn and celebrate that they seem not only to reflect a golden ideal in the distant past and the life and mind of Ch'ien Hsüan in his own time, but also to project a hope for the future. He believed even that the mythical Peach



Blossom Spring is here on earth, if only we are able to see it; and he wrote of the achievements of his exemplars, T'ao Ch'ien and Wang Hsi-chih, that they were the glory of China, timeless, undying. In his pure and crystalline works, man can live forever. We imagine him nodding his head at his friend Chou Mi's lines:

*I dream that the east wind comes,
That the snow is gone, and the river clear.*

Ch'ien's solution to the new problem of finding an appropriate balance among surface, structure, and meaning involved, first, distancing himself physically and mentally from his subjects. Memory, not direct experience, was his medium. Illusionistic techniques were unacceptable; they celebrated only the sensuous surface. Color, however, was used by Ch'ien in a new and powerful way, almost as pure field, with strong emotional and psychological impact. His *Home Again!* (No. 12) employs more areas of intense, flat color than the works of any painter of his time. With mesmerizing foliage and rock patterns, spatial disjunctions, and an interplay among surface configurations, the painting's world is neither here nor anywhere else that can be specified, except in the peculiar, dreamlike, and dazzling mind of the artist. If his *Pear Blossoms* are faded and pure, his garden world gleams with jade and gold and kingfisher turquoise, glittering, shining.

His poem, written to the left of the picture, can be read both as an appreciation of T'ao Ch'ien and *Home Again!*, and as a personal reflection, since Ch'ien Hsüan clearly chose to model his life upon that of T'ao Ch'ien:

*In front of his gate he planted five willows,
By the eastern fence, he picked chrysanthemums.
In his long chant is a lingering purity—
Alas, with never enough wine to sustain it.
To live in this world it is necessary to become deeply drunk,
For to take office would only bring shame.
In a moment of inspiration he composed Home Again!
The one poem alone of these thousand years.*

(WAI-KAM HO, 1968, no. 184; modified)

The complexity of voice here is remarkable. T'ao composed *Home Again!*, Ch'ien painted it. T'ao loved wine, Ch'ien is often said to have painted only when drunk. T'ao gave up his official post, Ch'ien refused to take office. T'ao returned home, Ch'ien returned home—each to tend his garden, to study, to create.

Ch'ien's golden portrayal of *Wang Hsi-chih Watching Geese* (No. 13) commemorates another artist of the Six Dynasties, and another monument in the history of gardens. Wang, China's greatest calligrapher, is shown observing the movements of geese in the water at the Orchid Pavilion, near Shan-yin in Chekiang province. From their motion he gained insight into the rhythmic potential of calligraphy. He had gathered with a number of friends at the Orchid Pavilion in the year 353, to celebrate spring. They drank wine, composed poetry, wandered in the hills, and, to mark the occasion, Wang wrote his celebrated *Preface to the Gathering at Orchid Pavilion*, the most influential monument in the history of the art of calligraphy. As in Ch'ien's *Home Again!*, a rich ethos is conveyed in the painting, recalling Wang Hsi-chih, the gathering of poets at

the Orchid Pavilion, the celebration of spring, and the greatest masterpiece of the scholarly art of calligraphy. The style of his painting, of jewellike color and pattern, is consistent with the image of a once and future paradise on earth that his art always conveys.

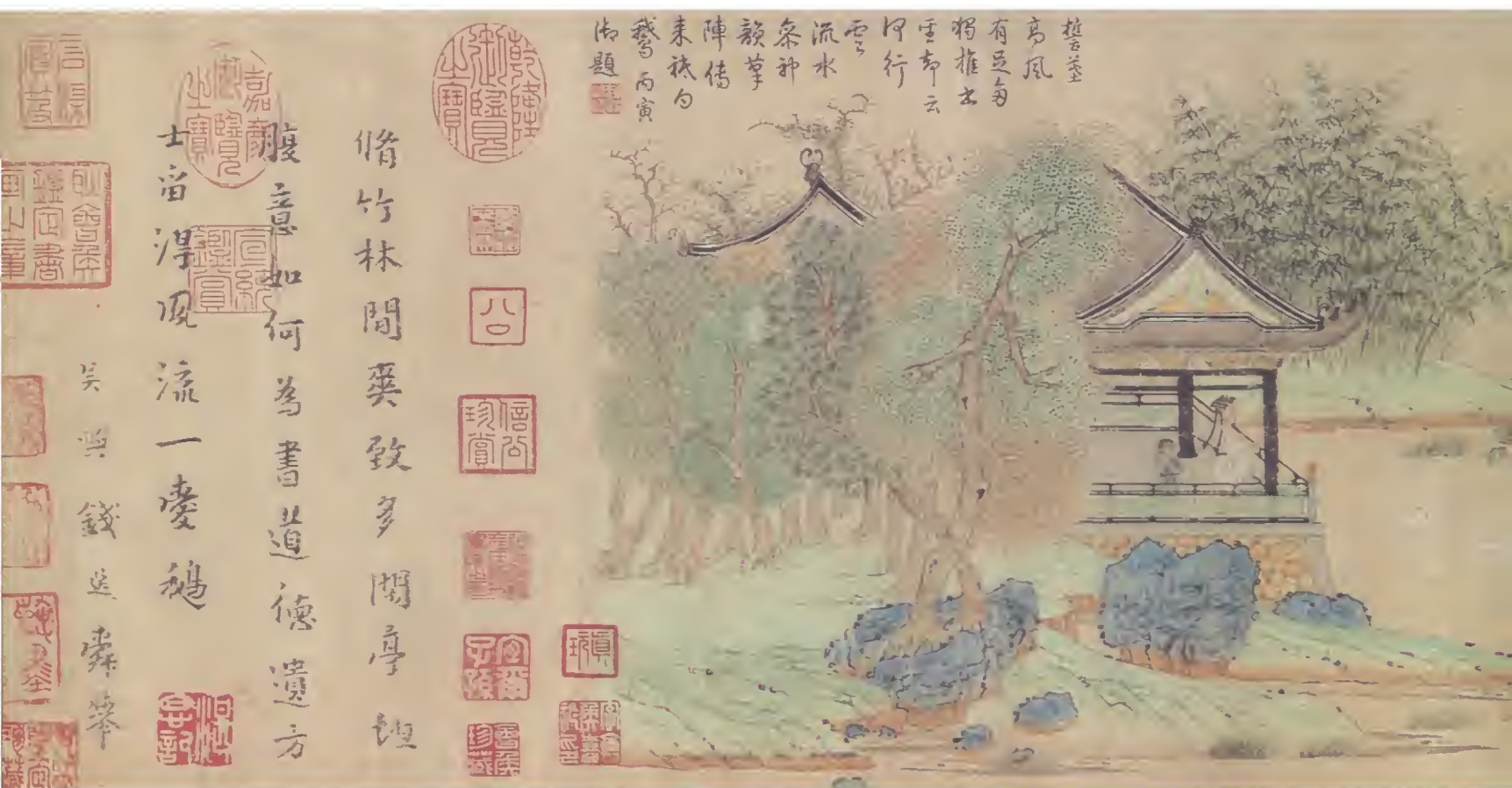
It may be of interest to consider the audience for this art. The Sung academicians had been employed by an institution, and attempted to excel within the range of expectations of their patrons, the emperor, and the court. Chao Meng-chien and a few others—scholars, civil officials, members of the imperial family—had a loftier clientele. They spoke with the voice of the emperor and the official elite, and would have wished to project an image of morality and even divine guidance, appropriate to their identity. Mu-ch'i and other Buddhist monks addressed a rougher, freer audience, one that traditionally venerated eccentricity and extreme behavior. With Ch'ien Hsüan the situation is less clear, his expectations less obvious. As a professional painter, dependent upon his art for his livelihood, he had to sell his paintings to make a living, although in all probability he owned land and was not wholly impoverished. In any case, he worried about the sale of forgeries of his work, and changed his studio name several times to stay a step ahead of his imitators. At the core of his audience, however, were undoubtedly the same *i-min* loyalists who honored Chao Meng-chien's narcissus as the fragrance of a nation. These were men like his friend Chou Mi (he had also known Chao Meng-chien in his youth), who devoted themselves to recording the achievements of the Sung dynasty, who looked back but also forward to the day when China would emerge from its trial untarnished. For this audience Ch'ien created a world of glittering cultural heroes and undying beauty, inventing as he did so styles of flower and bird painting and landscape that would forever appeal to the heirs of the Sung *i-min*.

Even during his lifetime, as we have seen, Ch'ien's art had many imitators. Obviously there was a thriving market for his new definition of the beautiful, particularly because owning his works could be considered a sign of loftiness in itself, like wearing a costume of faithfulness or loyalty to the fallen Sung. This involved little risk, after all, and conferred the qualities of the artist upon his patrons. As so often, the style outlasted its inventor to become a continuing emblem of his ideals and a new addition to the repertoire of practicing artists. To create a "Ch'ien Hsüan" required only the use of very pale colors, a slightly unreal manner of representation without any illusion of space or atmosphere, and an image that achieved the effect of distanced ethereality.

A painting that appears to be the work of one of Ch'ien's fourteenth-century followers is *Magpie in a Flowering Pear Tree* (No. 14). So quickly did Ch'ien's art assume the status of classic that the picture, done directly in his style, bears a spurious signature of Huang Ch'üan, the tenth-century master who is always paired with Hsü Hsi as progenitor of the genre of flower and bird painting. The painting is in fact catalogued in the eighteenth-century Ch'ing government collection as Huang Ch'üan's work. But we recognize it today as another testimony to the enormous popularity of Ch'ien Hsüan's cool, jewellike elegies to remembered beauty during the centuries following his death. It lacks the emotional irony we associate with him, but preserves the color of his elegant vision.



衡明植五柳 東籬采紫菊
 長嘯有餘清 無柰酒不足
 當世宜沈酣 作邑已悔辱
 乘興賦歸歎 千載一辭獨



哲基
 高風
 有足為
 獨推本
 至如云
 何行
 流水
 衆神
 顏草
 陣傳
 來扶句
 幾而寅
 出題

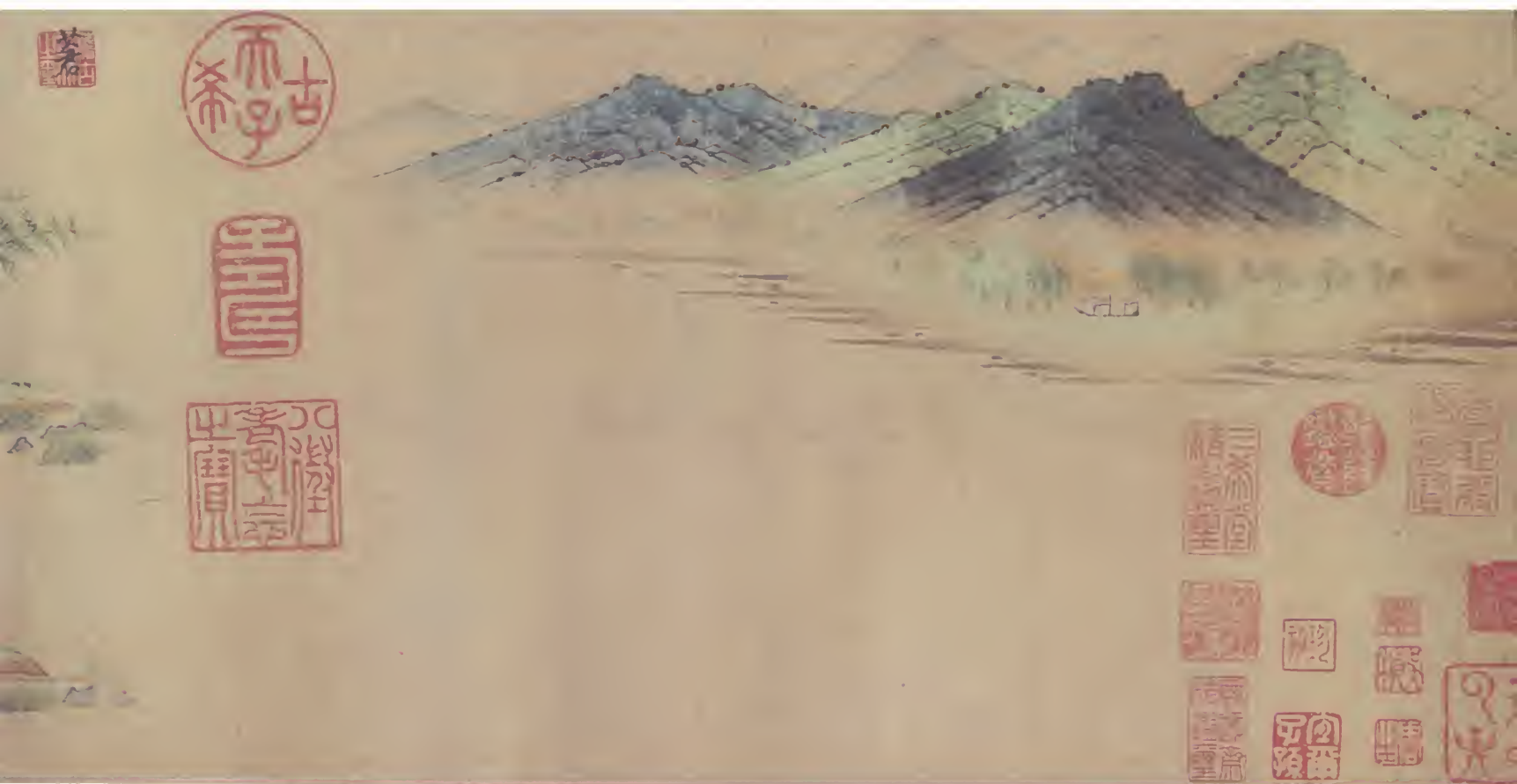
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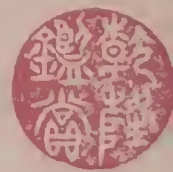
No. 12. **Home Again!** Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–after 1301); handscroll, ink and color on paper; Gift of John C. Ferguson, 1913; 13.220.124



No. 13. **Wang Hsi-chih Watching Geese.** Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–after 1301); handscroll, ink, color, and gold on paper; Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.6



No. 14. **Magpie in a Flowering Pear Tree.**
*Anonymous artist (Yüan); hanging scroll, ink
 and color on paper; Lent by John B. Elliott.
 Opposite: Detail*



肖物渲芳摠化機藝而道
也區應稀雪禽翻樹殘英
墜却訝梳翎落去飛





No. 15. **Crane in a Bamboo Grove.** *Anonymous artist (late Sung or Yüan); hanging scroll mounted on panel, ink and color on silk; Lent by The Crane Company; L.1980.99*

Crane, Bamboo, and Pine:

The Garden of

Remote Mystery

IN WEN CHENG-MING'S GARDEN portraits of the *Cho-cheng Yüan* a crane is seen standing amidst a grove of surrounding bamboo (see No. 22, Leaf C); and in Yüan Chiang's depiction of the Nanking *Chan-yüan* red-topped Manchurian cranes drink from a distant pool (see No. 42, detail). Cranes and gardens have a special affinity in China. For more than a thousand years cranes, far more than dogs or cats, have been the companions of scholars. To walk with a dog in a garden may be merely to frighten and disrupt; to stroll with a crane is to join the natural flow of elements: the crane *is* the garden, like the bamboo itself. An inspiring bird, embodying freedom, dignity, strength, longevity, and faithfulness, the crane has been a subject of myth, legend, and art since the Chou dynasty. In early art, and in funerary art since, it is often present to carry the soul into heaven. Many Taoist immortals are said to have become cranes, and the bird is often referred to as "this immortal." Conversely, cranes can be encouraged to dance with men, and often seem to have a natural affinity for human company. The tenth-century hermit poet Lin Pu referred to them as his children, and they were trained to fly and fetch him in his fishing boat when visitors came. *I-ho ming*, "Memorial to a Dead Crane," carved into a cliff in the sixth century, is one of the hallowed monuments of Chinese culture.

In painting, the crane is usually accompanied by bamboo or pines, and is hence one of those esteemed subjects, like plum blossoms, bamboo, orchid, pine, and chrysanthemum, that constitute the ideal scholar's garden. Hsüeh Chi, an eighth-century scholar, was celebrated for his pictures of cranes. Huang Ch'üan painted them, and the most famous work of the kind is the Buddhist monk Mu-ch'i's *Crane in a Bamboo Grove*, the left panel of his profound *Kuan-yin Triptych* in the Daitokuji Temple, Kyoto. The painting exhibited here is more traditional, and the image a quieter one (No. 15). It is nonetheless among the earliest and finest examples of the subject extant. It was probably painted by a professional artist working in Hangchow or Ningpo in the late thirteenth century. The two large seals in the upper left corner purport to be those of the twelfth-century master Chao Po-chü; that they appear to be modeled after his own seals, which no longer exist, is one reason among many to believe that the painting was done close to his lifetime. The term *yu*, "dark and mysterious," describes an element generally considered essential in the aesthetic of garden design. Bamboo and crane, deep rock grottoes, ancient twisted pines, plum blossoms and orchids, shaded paths, green water and mossy walls—from them are formed the qualities of *yu*. Such a garden needs a crane, and this is ours.

"This gentleman," as the bamboo is often called, is undoubtedly the single



No. 16. **Bamboo and Rock**, dated 1318. *Li K'an* (1245–1320); pair of hanging scrolls, ink and color on silk; Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.7a, b

No. 17. **Bamboo Grove.** Shen Hsüan (active ca. 1370–1400); handscroll, ink and pale color on paper; Edward Elliott Family Collection; Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981; 1981.285.16



most beloved plant in the Chinese garden. Is there anywhere in China a garden that has no bamboo? Perhaps only rocks are as necessary as the lush green, thick, and pliant plant called *chu*. They are a natural and perhaps inevitable pair, since like so many other quintessential Chinese phenomena they represent exact opposites as elements of nature: inert rocks, the bones of the earth's structure; prolific, irrepressible bamboo, embodiment of life and growth. It provides shade and cool breezes in summer, protection against wind in winter; in spring its shoots become delicacies for the table. Through all seasons it remains like a faithful friend, "this gentleman." As Su Shih wrote: "Without meals one becomes thin;/Without bamboo one becomes vulgar" (TIEN-CHANG LAI, 1977, p. 63; modified). Another poet, Li Tung-yang, remembered: "Last night I dreamed of bamboo,/And felt a kind of cleansing effect" (LAI, 1977, p. 64). Most of the trees and flowers of the Chinese garden are associated popularly with specific individuals who admired them particularly and enhanced them by their affection. Hence, one thinks inevitably of Ch'ü Yüan and orchids, Chou Tun-i and the lotus, T'ao Ch'ien and chrysanthemums, Lin Pu and plum blossoms, and so forth. Only with bamboo does this pattern fail. No Chinese writer has ever professed anything but affection for bamboo, to the best of my knowledge. The plant is virtually synonymous with China and the Chinese people.

From the beginning of its popularity as a subject in painting, there have been two main traditions of bamboo depiction: colored bamboo, represented in this exhibition by Li K'an's *Bamboo and Rock* (No. 16); and ink bamboo, represented by Shen Hsüan's *Bamboo Grove* (No. 17). Li K'an (1245–1320) painted in both styles with equal confidence, but it is unlikely that a greater master of the carefully descriptive realistic manner has lived since his lifetime. The technique of *Bamboo and Rocks* is similar to that in Hui-tsung's *Finches and Bamboo*, and represents a continuation of the Sung academic manner. It begins with precise drawing of every detail of stalks, shoots, and leaves, sharp outlines then carefully filled in with shading and color. This realistic, descriptive technique is put in the



No. 18. **Pine and Rock.** *Wu Po-li* (active late 14th–early 15th c.); hanging scroll, ink on paper; Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.2. Opposite: Detail



service of a highly selective presentation, in principle again recalling Sung, though the image is clearly now of another age and another purpose. We are given not an artfully arranged glimpse of cosmic reality, but a symbol. The bamboo, natural environment of finches, cranes, and a myriad other birds and small creatures, is presented instead as moral example, an analogue of the human capacity to emulate nature: a monument to growth, to endurance, to the flourishing of life, and to perfectibility.

The late fourteenth-century painter Shen Hsüan's *Bamboo Grove* (No. 17) portrays the plant in a distinctive mood of remoteness and delicacy. Growing by a stream from a cluster of rocks, six or seven slender stalks seem to sway in a soft breeze. The technique of direct ink painting and the style are derived from Chao Meng-fu (1254–1322), an influential early Yüan painter who popularized a restrained but sketchy manner based in part upon the principles of the art of calligraphy. In his colophon to the painting, dated 1562, the painter Wen Chia asks whether it is possible that Shen was actually copying a work by Chao. The resemblance is in fact quite striking, although Chao rarely created such lyrical, charming pictures.

This is the only known work by Shen Hsüan. It is now mounted together with a landscape by the late fourteenth-century master Chao Yüan. They were joined by the sixteenth-century owner for whom Wen Chia wrote his colophon. Since this is an uncommon practice unless there was some historical connection between the works so joined, it is likely that Chao and Shen were approximate contemporaries.

Bamboo Grove allows us to see “this gentleman” as a recluse, companion of rocks and water as always. While Li K'an gives us bamboo as tactile object and moral symbol, Shen Hsüan suggests its natural mood of tranquillity, delicate shadows, and gentle movement. Growing wild or at the edge of the garden, it evokes thoughts of purity and freedom, like the crane.

Scarcely less necessary than bamboo to the structure and meaning of the scholar's garden is the pine. Called “the patriarch of trees” by Wang An-shih (LAI, 1977, p. 3) and made a symbol of the virtuous man by everyone from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung, the pine is the natural prince of the Chinese garden. It has been a prominent subject in painting since the eighth century, and the great landscape master Ching Hao (ca. 900) singled it out as the primary moral exemplar of the landscape.

Pine and Rock (No. 18) was painted about 1400 by an obscure Taoist painter named Wu Po-li, and bears an encomium written by the national head of the Taoist church at that time, Chang Yü-ch'u. A recent owner added a number of spurious seals to the painting in order to transform a work by a minor Ming artist into a masterpiece by the tenth-century Buddhist painter Chü-jan. This was an effort as futile and doomed to failure as putting a cardinal's robes on the pope of the Taoist Church and declaring him archbishop of Rome. *Pine and Rock* is a Taoist painting and could not be mistaken for anything else. Its wet, free-flowing execution marks it as a survivor by one of the distinctive small group of Taoist masters active especially in Kiangsi province in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Fang Ts'ung-i was the most famous of them, and Wu Po-li is a close follower of Fang. The impression of wet atmosphere and the surging, living forms—particularly the dragonlike swirling growth of the pine—are the formal

elements of the style most evident. The image recalls Ching Hao's *Eulogy to the Pine*: "a gigantic pine tree, its aged bark overgrown with lichen, its winged scales seeming to ride in the air. In stature it is like a coiling dragon trying to reach the Milky Way" (FONG AND HEARN, 1982, p. 44).

The orchid and the plum also belong in that small category of hallowed symbols that make the scholar's garden a moral and philosophical guide and inspiration. Huang T'ing-chien, the Sung poet, described the orchid as the national flower of China: "When a scholar's ability and character have attained national eminence, he is called a national scholar; when a woman's beauty is of a queenly status, she is called a national beauty. The orchid's fragrance excels that of other flowers and it should be called national fragrance. The orchid has always been highly valued, because its qualities are so characteristic of the perfect person. It thrives in the forest and its perfume is undiminished by the absence of people to appreciate it, and it survives the snow and frost without undergoing any change in its nature" (LAI, 1977, p. 150). Confucius admired the flower for its beauty and integrity in the wilderness, and the poet Ch'ü Yüan made of it an enduring emblem of loyalty. We have seen it portrayed in all of its soft beauty by Ma Lin. The Buddhist monk painter Hsüeh-ch'uang (active ca. 1340-1350), in his *Orchid, Bamboo, and Rock* (No. 19), gives us, in contrast, a pictorialization of the philosophy embodied in the plant. Beside his graceful, fragrant flower are brambles and rocks, and a small bamboo—companions in the wilderness or in the garden. The long swaying leaves of the orchid curve out as if wafting the lonely fragrance of the flower through the air, recalling the poem written by Su Shih:

*In the quiet valley I can see no orchids growing—
By accident, a gentle breeze betrays their presence.
It is a liberating fragrance, pure and unsullied—
One sniff of it is enough to give enlightenment.*

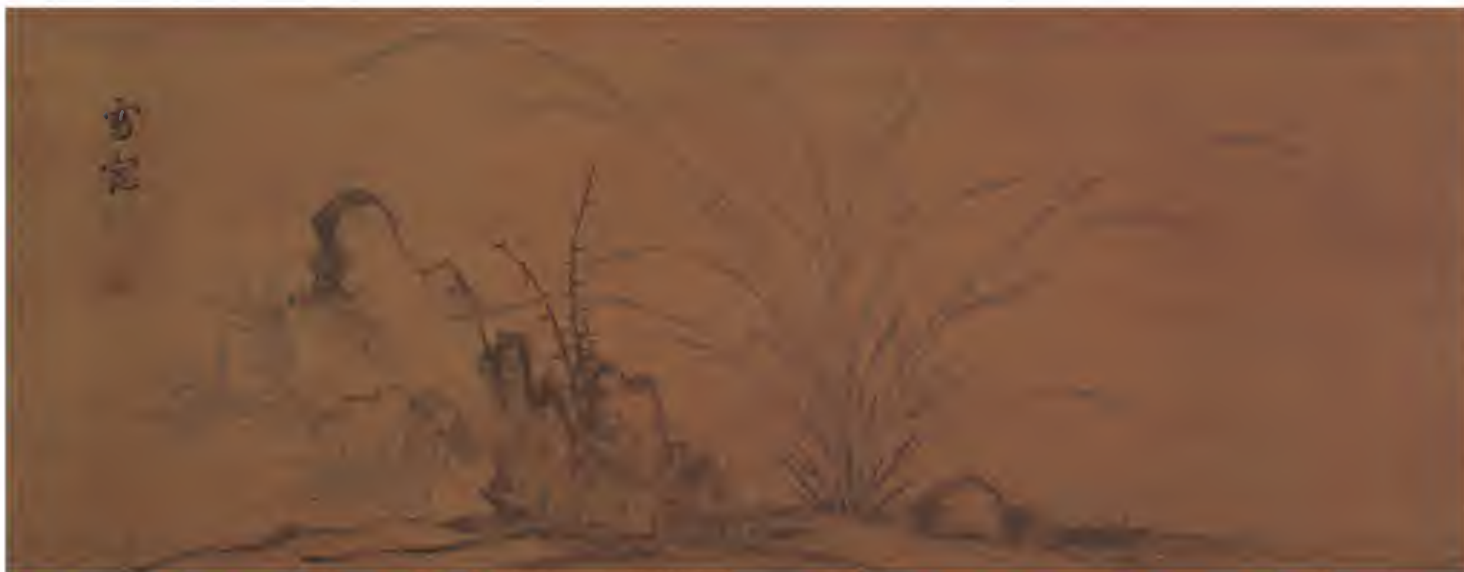
(LAI, 1977, p. 151)

Hsüeh-ch'uang, also known as P'u-ming, was abbot of several temples in southeastern China and a religious leader of some importance. Arbiters of elegant taste found his popular paintings of orchids coarse and vulgar, "fit only to hang in monks' quarters" (HSIA WEN-YEN, 1365), but that was their usual and predictable attitude toward Buddhists. His many extant paintings represent a distinctive, quiet achievement in the portrayal of orchids and in conveying the aesthetic and the moral ideas associated with the flower.

"The pure whiteness of winter" is the conventional formulation of the winter plum's aesthetic and philosophy. Hsü Ching so titled his painting of *Plum Blossoms in Snow* (No. 20), dated 1441, partaking of a tradition of imagery in poetry and painting that goes back a thousand years—like every element of the scholar's garden. Popular symbols of court beauties and, again, of reclusion, they embrace romance, tears, lost loves, and the eternal return of springtime. Flowering in snow and cold, they are harbingers of warmth and beauty, companions of the winter:

*Exuding a beautiful perfume
Unobtrusive from sparse boughs*

No. 19. **Orchid, Bamboo, and Rock.** *Hsüeh-ch'uang* (active ca. 1340–1350); hanging scroll, ink and pale color on silk; Lent by John B. Elliott



*Undaunted by snow and cruel wind,
Having naught to do with wealth and position.*

(LAI, 1977, p. 100)

Li Ch'ing-chao wrote of bittersweet memories to the tune *Pure Serene Music*:

*Year after year in the snow
we'd pick plum blossoms while we drank,
Pulling at all the petals to no good purpose,
drenching our clothes with pure white tears.*

*This year I'm at the end of the world,
strand by strand my hair turns gray.
Judging by the force of the evening wind
plum blossoms will be hard to come by.*

(EOYANG, 1975, p. 366)

Hsü Ching simply gives us the plum tree as a stark and beautiful image. He paints the tree as Li K'an painted bamboo and Hui-tsung finches: all are students of life, observing, studying, representing. Using branches like wood sculpture bedecked with tiny blossoms, he invites us into a fragrant bower formed of framing arches. The void at the center is compelling. In his artful presentation, it becomes a metaphor of the ultimate purity within the pure whiteness of winter. We trace and touch the forms in our minds, we move through them, they surround us.

These paintings, of crane and bamboo, pine, orchid and plum, dating from the thirteenth to fifteenth century and spanning portions of three dynasties—Sung, Yüan, and Ming—bring to our imaginary garden reminders of the past, of beauty and morality, of the scholars and immortals evoked in the rustle of bamboo, the wind in the pines, the dark whoop of a crane, the lovely fragrance of the orchid. We re-create the aesthetic of *yu*, the shadowed, mysterious, and profound experience of the scholar's garden, a world apart, conveying the memory of human history and the sense of cultural identity.



No. 20. Plum Blossoms in Snow, dated 1441. Hsü Ching (active first half 15th c.); hanging scroll, ink on silk; Edward Elliott Family Collection; Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982; 1982.1.5



No. 21. **Flowers of the Four Seasons.** *Shen Chou* (1427–1509); handscroll, ink and color on paper; Purchase, *The Dillon Fund Gift, in memory of Phyllis E. Dillon*, 1982; 1982.205; Detail, Narcissus and Plum

Flowers from the Gardens of Soochow

AN OLD SAYING maintains “Above are the heavenly palaces, below are Soochow and Hangchow.” Hangchow’s beauty and the distinctive aesthetic associated with the city are products of the Southern Sung period, when it was the capital of the dynasty. Soochow’s cultural and aesthetic dominance occurred from about 1350 through 1550, primarily during the Ming dynasty. Many of the most distinguished painters of the time lived and worked in Soochow, and all but one of the eight paintings in this chapter were created in the period of about 1490 to 1550, Soochow’s heady years of national eminence. Chinese writers generally estimate the comparative artistic achievements of Hangchow and Soochow by ranging the so-called Che school of Ming court painters, led by Tai Chin, a native of Hangchow, alongside the sixteenth-century Soochow masters, the Wu school, led by Shen Chou (1427–1509), a native of Wu (Soochow). Inevitably, Soochow emerges as superior. A more reasonable approach is to directly compare the strengths of both great cities, matching Southern Sung academic art with the scholarly art of sixteenth-century Soochow. Each constitutes an artistic ideal unique and peculiar to its time and place, each a perfect embodiment of its own aesthetic.

Soochow’s gardens are today among the most admired in the world. Over a hundred of them still exist, and are gradually being rebuilt and opened as public monuments. The Metropolitan Museum’s Astor Court is modeled in part after one of them, the Garden of the Master of Fishing Nets. The majority of gardens still existing were built in the Ming period, when Soochow acquired its reputation as the garden capital of China; they have however been rebuilt many times since. Thousands of tourists visit them every day, and they need no introduction here. We concentrate instead upon a selection of paintings that convey the spirit, forms, and meanings of the Ming gardens of Soochow, as experienced by some of the artists who designed them, lived in them, and enjoyed them in a way that is no longer possible.

Shen Chou’s *Flowers of the Four Seasons* (No. 21) appears to have been painted for the artist’s own amusement. How else explain the total absence of pretension, of effort, even of care for effect? Perhaps we must know something of the personality of the painter to see his simplicity clearly. In all likelihood he is the most beloved artist of Chinese history; few others are accorded such high affection and esteem. “A field of stones” he called himself, an allusion to utter uselessness; today he might be called a man who couldn’t tie his shoelaces. Practicality was not his forte. He never took office, cared for his aging mother during most of her eighty years, and seems never to have traveled very far from Soochow, where he was born. An excursion into nearby hills was enough to set his



No. 21. **Flowers of the Four Seasons.** *Detail, Rose Mallow and Magnolia*

mind reeling with observations and questions. What is the relationship between the voice of the turtledove and the summer rain? What does the crab know and experience at the bottom of the lake, or the crows in the high pines? What is the mind, and what is its relationship to the mind of the universe? The questions that preoccupied him throughout his life became the subjects of his art, so that we regard his works, above those of all other artists, as the manifestation of the person. As a poet he wrote with the simplicity of the T'ang poets:

*Flowers fall, water flows, spring is gone.
Grasses grow, rain calls, sadness arrives.
One day, by lowered curtain, I sit alone,
Evening clears, and before me is the mountain.*

As Wolfgang Bauer comments, the Ch'an Buddhists "were not attracted by the seething life in the endless cycle of birth and death, but by the atemporal idea, constantly blurred by the multiplicity of movement, yet rising behind it in inexhaustible calm, yet promising to emerge in a clear and immutable glow only when the flickering of the visible world was extinguished" (1976, p. 175).

Shen Chou communed as a mystic poet with the world, always looking both at seething life and for the immutable glow that lies behind it. His poem, which moves from spring to summer and fall, recalls the emotions of each season, and ends with the realization once more that, after the flowers have blossomed and died, the grass grown tall then brown, the leaves fallen from the trees, one sees clearly again the mountain they have long obscured. Suddenly, it is there.



No. 21. Flowers of the Four Seasons. *Detail*, Hibiscus



No. 21. Flowers of the Four Seasons. *Detail*, Gardenia

Shen Chou was always seeing things that others did not, and he jolts us with his reveries:

*The moon is coming up the blue sky,
It falls into my wine cup.
When wine is gone, the moon suddenly disappears,
But in the sky, eternally, it lives on.*

(IRVING LO, 1975, p. 466; modified)

In *Flowers*, he paints like a man moving his hand wonderingly over his subjects—magnolia, peony, gardenia, hollyhock, hibiscus, chrysanthemum, rose mallow, narcissus, plum blossom—as if performing a ritual. His affectionate memory of the flowers blooming in order through the seasons recalls Ou-yang Hsiu:

*The light and the deep, the red and the white should be
spaced apart;
The early and the late should likewise be planted in due
order.
My desire is, throughout the four seasons, to bring wine along,
And to let not a single day pass without some flower opening.*

(A. R. DAVIS, ed., 1962, p. 37)

Aesthetically, Shen Chou is sympathetic to Ch'ien Hsüan, whose pale colors and effortless drawing his art shares. He was also inspired by Mu-ch'i, both in spirit and in technique, for they both saw a similar significance in mundane things. Although it is not dated, *Flowers of the Four Seasons* was painted when Shen was about seventy years old. The nearest parallels to this work are the painting of a *Crab Apple* in the Cleveland Museum of Art, dated 1500, and *Sketches from Life*, a scroll in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, painted in 1494. By this time in his life, Shen Chou generally painted in an easy, natural manner, rarely choosing the ambitious compositions or techniques of earlier years. His flowers are painted in the "boneless" style, direct color painting without outlines, a manner he used throughout his lifetime. Compared with the paintings of a virtuoso of the technique like his contemporary Sun Lung, or even with some of his own earlier works, Shen Chou's flowers are a remarkably restrained, ethereal version of the style. The "boneless" technique had come to be a vehicle for free-flowing ink washes and brilliant flourish, but there is none of that here. Shen had probably drawn each of the flowers hundreds of times, and his brush moves easily, slowly, almost ritually through stalks, branches, petals, stamens, like an old man walking a favorite path in the hills once more.

The painters inspired by Shen Chou were numerous and diverse. Few imitated his style directly, however, choosing rather to emulate his ideal. All the Soochow masters, for example, excelled in the painting of flowers, as well as such standard subjects as landscape and bamboo. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier tradition of literati painting: among the great masters of the Yüan period who provided the main inspiration of the Soochow painters, only Ch'ien Hsüan excelled in all subjects, especially flowers. Chao Meng-fu, Kao K'o-kung, Li K'an, Sheng Mou, Wu Chen, Huang Kung-wang, Wang Meng, Ni Tsan—all rarely if ever essayed the flower and bird genre. In contrast, an ideal exhibition of flower and bird painting in the Ming dynasty would include works by Shen Chou, Wen

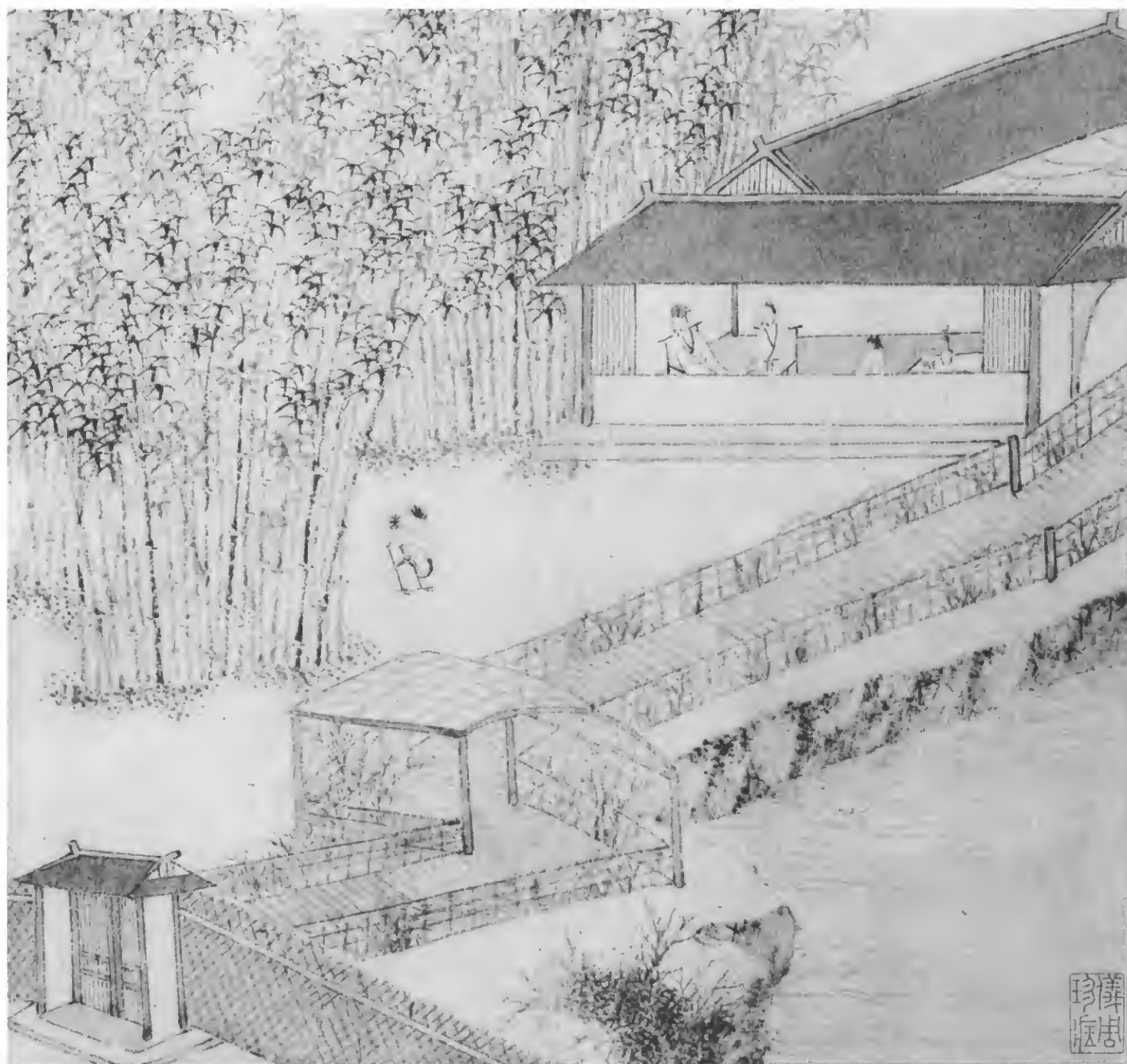
Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin, Ch'en Shun, and Lu Chih; all are in fact included here. Clearly, flower and bird subjects were very important to the scholar-artists of Soochow in the sixteenth century—appropriately enough in the city of gardens.

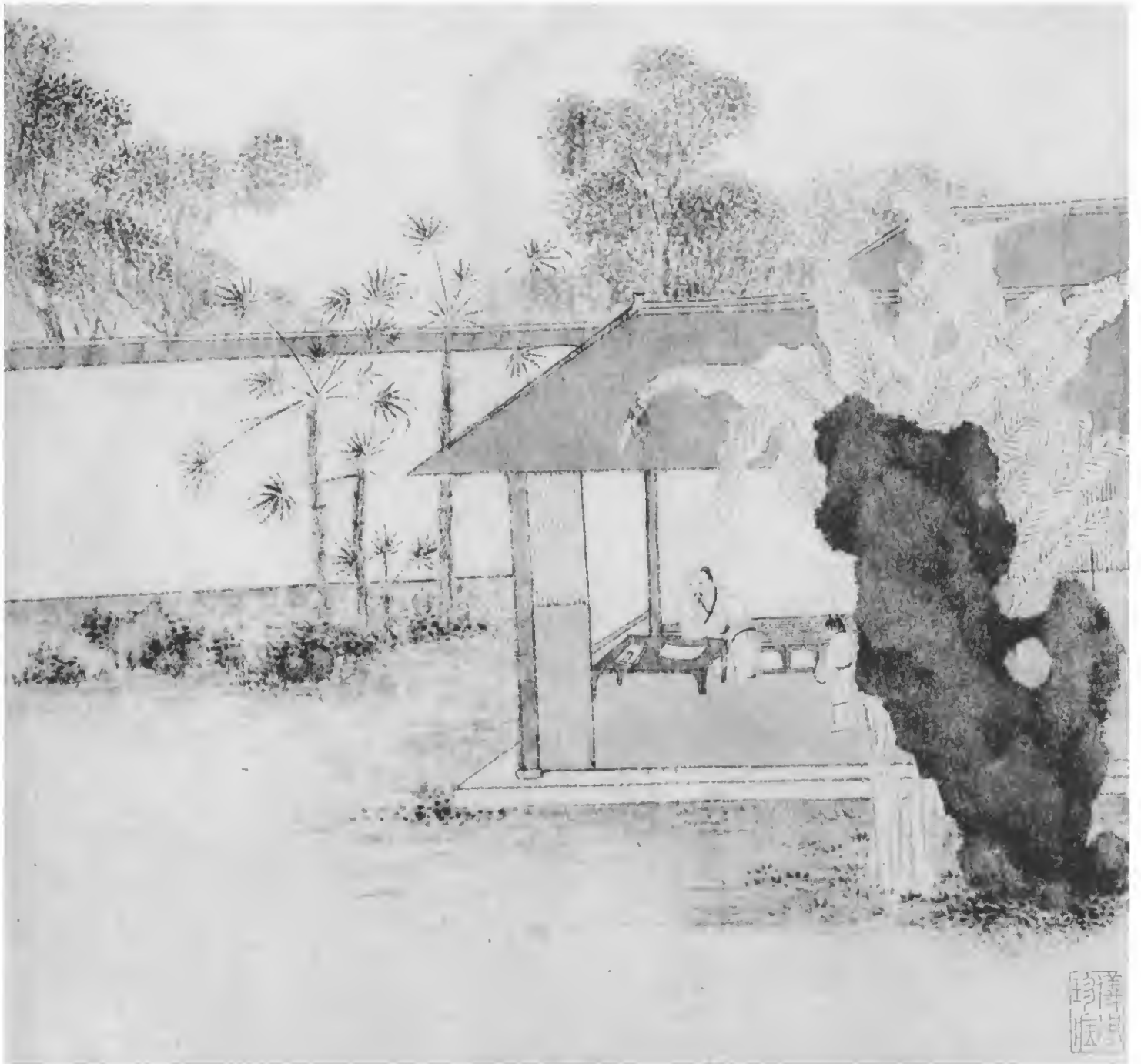
The painting of gardens as well as flowers was esteemed and came to constitute a separate genre, popular well into the seventeenth century. I refer specifically to portraitlike garden studies, not to the elegant gathering in the garden, a theme that goes back to Wang Hsi-chih at the Orchid Pavilion. Soochow garden paintings are more reminiscent of the Wang-ch'uan Villa of Wang Wei, or the Lung-mien Mountain Villa of Li Kung-lin. But there are substantial differences between these garden pictures and any that have been seen before. Wen Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin, and Ch'iu Ying offer us the gardens of Soochow with an intimacy and specificity rarely suggested in earlier works. So numerous are their garden scenes and so clearly do the paintings define the genre, that we are led to conclude that theirs is a truly urban art, art produced in and for a bustling, crowded commercial center. Here the garden was all important, since it was the symbolic miniature model of and substitute for the world of nature so little accessible to urban dwellers. The Ming Soochow gardens were truly retreats within the city from the city. The Sung academicians after all had been privy to the grand seclusion of the great imperial palaces and parks, while most of the Yüan painters traveled more widely and frequently than was necessary in times less disturbed than theirs, when for political and economic reasons it was not advisable to remain long in a major city.

Nanking, in the fifteenth century, may have been the first Chinese city to produce a distinctly urban art, created by private citizens of the area, and for the use of the local population. In the sixteenth century Soochow became the major center, and its native sons the leading artistic figures of the time. Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin, Lu Chih, and Ch'en Shun all lived and died in Soochow, rarely going far from it, producing images of the city and its surroundings for themselves and for the thriving commercial and administrative patrons who had made Soochow the wealthiest city in China.

Gardens here had new forms, as well as modified functions. They were in the city, generally as walled precincts large and small, but far smaller on the whole than the grand scholarly estates of former times. Wen Cheng-ming (1470–1559) lived and worked in one of them, *The Cho-cheng Yüan*, or Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician, for many years, and at least twice painted its portrait in words and images. In 1533 he created a large album of double leaves, portraying in it thirty-one sites from the garden. Eighteen years later, at the age of eighty-one, he painted another, smaller album of the garden, this of only eight leaves with matching poems taken directly from the earlier work (No. 22). During those eighteen years, much in the garden had changed. The album contains delicate, silvery depictions of *The Bank of Many Fragrances*, *The Small Pavilion of Crashing Waves*, *The Bamboo Bank* (Leaf C), *The Plantain Enclosure* (Leaf D), *The Fishing Stone*, *The Garden of Visiting Birds*, *Jade Spring*, and *The Locust Tree Canopy*.

The urbanization of Soochow painting appears most vividly in the art of Wen Cheng-ming. Straight, rigid lines abound; figures are locked into spaces themselves enclosed in spaces, as in the multiple barriers separating us from the pavilion at *The Bank of Many Fragrances*; space itself is ambiguous, and rela-





No. 22. *The Cho-cheng Yüan*, dated 1551. *Wen Cheng-ming* (1470-1559); album of eight leaves, ink on paper; Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1979; 1979.458.1a-h. Left: Leaf C, *The Bamboo Bank*. Right: Leaf D, *The Plantain Enclosure*

tionships uncertain. What we might today consider a sense of dislocation pervades these images, countered by the erecting of architectural structures in rigid lines and the raising of barriers beyond barriers, as if to build security.

Such internal tensions are not less apparent in Wen's *Old Wisteria Among Trees and Rocks* (No. 23), painted about 1531 and typical of the tree and rock compositions for which the painter is famed. It is not a pretty picture. If any of the three trees in the composition has attained freedom to grow, it has been only with desperate struggle. The central tree is in fact dead, girdled now by a flowering wisteria vine. The frontmost tree is shattered and broken, but maintains a precarious second trunk and a small umbrella of blossoms. A twisted, needle-thick cypress bends down from the right as if under crushing weight. Dead and living alike are rooted in rock. Space does not exist. The artist's poem, in the upper left, offers scant relief from the oppressive vision:

*An ancient vine, a hundred feet long, suspends its clear shade,
An urgent wind, blowing rain, sweeps over.
Horses and carriages do not alarm me; my heart is like
water.
Only now do I perceive that within city walls is the red dust.*

Wen symbolizes the earthly and vulgar aspects of life by the image of red dust. The almost painful tensions that grip Wen's art—the bleak, dislocated imagery and dry, astringent flavor—seem to be physical embodiments of the severe, aging master, while in his heart he continued to pursue the ideal of colorless, pure water under flinty stone. He painted several pictures with this withered, antique flavor in 1531; they are striking in their consistency. No explanation has yet been offered for them, but we can assume that broken, stunted trees, crushing weights, and stifling encumbrances are a reflection of his life and mind at that time. All was not light and pleasure in the gardens of Soochow.

The third of the distinguished Soochow artists represented here is T'ang Yin (1470–1524). His *Song of One Year* (No. 24a) expresses the philosophy of life associated with him, hedonistic, satirical, regretful:

*Three hundred sixty days in one year,
Ninety days each in spring, summer, autumn, winter;
Winter's chill and summer's heat are hardest to bear,
Cold like a knife, hot like a burn;
Spring's third month and autumn's ninth are said to be warm,
But with warm weather, wind and rain are frequent.
Calculating carefully, in one year good days are few,
An additional difficulty is finding good scenery;
Suppose you do happen upon beautiful scenery on a fine day,
There is still the matter of an appreciative heart and a
pleasant time.
Don't burn tall candles reflecting in goblets of fragrant wine!
That is also the empty life in the world of men.
The ancients have words that get to the point,
Urging people to grasp candles and make merry through
the night:*

No. 23. Old Wisteria among Trees and Rocks. *Wen Cheng-ming* (1470-1559); hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; Gift of John C. Ferguson, 1913; 13.220.110



No. 24. *Song of One Year*, dated 1522. T'ang Yin (1470–1524); folding fan, ink on gold-flecked paper; Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.4a



*"A quarter of an hour of a spring evening is worth a
thousand strings of cash."*

I say, "Even with a thousand, you can't buy it back."

(ALFREDA MURCK; modified)

On the opposite side of the calligraphy fan was a painting of bamboo in spring rain, now separately mounted and preserved (No. 24b). Another poem accompanies it:

*The crash of thunder sets the lush bamboo moving,
Sweeping the ground with its dragon whiskers and long
phoenix tails.*

*Looking up from below the curtain I play my flute;
The bright moon fills the sky, shining on the Hsiao and
Hsiang Rivers.*

T'ang Yin's debauched personal life, following the public humiliation of a national examination scandal that found him guilty of cheating, did not prevent him from becoming one of the most accomplished painters of his day. Like his popular songs and poems, his paintings are directly accessible and supremely accomplished. Far simpler and more quickly painted than his friend Wen Cheng-ming's *Old Wisteria*, T'ang Yin's bamboo is a wet, living, flourishing plant, heavy with rain, partially shrouded in clearing mists, elegantly arranged within the curving shape of its gold-flecked fan. The last character of the poem almost touches the rightmost leaf of the bamboo, joining word to picture in a way that seems to set in motion the shimmering cluster of dark leaves swaying off to the left.



Certainly the most exuberant, open, and unabashedly sensuous artist of the major Soochow masters was Ch'en Shun, better known as Ch'en Tao-fu (1483–1544). A wealthy landowner and the artistic heir of both Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming, Ch'en turned away from the tense and limiting tendencies of literati painting toward a frank celebration of color and riotous beauty in the depiction of gardens and flowers. Like most of the Soochow painters, Ch'en had his preferences. Shen Chou had evenhandedly surveyed the four seasons, finding pleasure and sadness in all. Wen Cheng-ming was singularly an artist of the autumn and winter, and T'ang Yin of eternal spring. For Ch'en Shun, the only season was the flowering season, late spring through summer—the season of colors. His *Summer Garden* (No. 25), over ten feet high, is scarcely large enough to contain the ambition of his sweeping, darting, slashing brush. Perhaps inspired by Shen Chou's equally grandiose *Yellow Chrysanthemums and Red Osmanthus* of 1468 (collection of Mr. and Mrs. A. Dean Perry, Cleveland), the subject of the cool garden in hot summer was a favorite of Ch'en. A similar composition, bearing the same poetic inscription, is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. His poem reads:

*In steaming summer the days are unbearably long,
 With linen kerchief and a palm-leaf fan I mount my
 rattan couch.
 When the shade of the flowers meets a cool breeze from the
 water,
 Where else on earth could one find such a place as this
 White Jade Hall!*

(FONG AND HEARN, 1982; modified)



No. 25. **Summer Garden** (ca. 1530). Ch'en Shun (1483-1544); hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.17. Opposite: Detail





No. 26. **Garden Flowers**, dated 1540. Ch'en Shun (1483–1544); album of sixteen leaves, ink and color on paper; Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.16. Leaf N, Tree Peony and Japanese Quince

Presumably the garden of a governmental office or a palace, the White Jade Hall symbolizes the cool heart of steaming summer, found where a breeze from the lotus pond wafts through the shadowed fragrance of magnolia, pomegranate, and lily.

Ch'en Shun, like all of the Soochow masters, sometimes painted in ink alone. His most arresting pictures, however, are those in which he paints in pure color, in the "boneless" style. In his own time, only Ch'iu Ying's romantic blue and green landscapes rivaled him for coloristic brilliance. Perhaps the most vital record of Ch'en's experiments with pure color and with flower painting is the sixteen-leaf album, *Garden Flowers*, in the Metropolitan Museum (No. 26). Almost without precedent is the painter's exploration of aesthetic ideas that scholar-artists had largely avoided in recent times: for example, the profuse, extravagant brilliance of color and form, the flowers in their glory spreading and filling all space. Twenty-seven species of flower, some of them repeated several times, have been identified for this catalogue by Edwin T. Morris, including many that are familiar to New York and New England gardeners: rose, day lily, orchid, peony, cassia, hydrangea, gardenia, azalea, aster, morning glory, daffodil, camellia, quince, deutzia, lily (all species are identified in the catalogue list entry). We are reminded that China has been called "Mother of Gardens" for the sheer number of flowers, flowering shrubs, and ornamental trees that are native to the country. Notable and curious in Ch'en's exuberant pageantry of flowers is the absence or relatively minor role of the plants generally regarded as



No. 26. **Garden Flowers.** *Leaf P*, Deutzia, Orchid Leaves, and Hemp Leaves

typical of the scholars' taste: bamboo (none), pine (none), plum blossom (one), chrysanthemum (none), hibiscus (none), lotus (one), plantain (none). Of course, this is a summer garden, and summer is not the season usually commemorated in scholars' paintings.

Compositions of this extravagant type had often been painted by the Che school masters, and Ch'en, like Hsü Wei who followed him, was attracted to the florid, extreme, loose, wet realm of artistic expression. Chin Nung, who studied this album two hundred years later, was obviously inspired by it to try his own album of plum blossoms in the extravagant mode (see No. 44). Ou-yang Hsiu, we remember, had asked only that "not a single day pass without some flower opening," a romantic, hedonistic attitude that had a surprising popularity, even in lofty Soochow artistic circles. Ch'en was a student of Wen Cheng-ming's, but also a wealthy, sensuous man of very different temperament.

Another follower of Wen Cheng-ming, Lu Chih (1496–1576), counts among the most accomplished garden and flower painters of the Ming period. His life of relative poverty was modeled upon that of T'ao Ch'ien. He evidently held some minor office in his youth, but he soon retired to a life of poetry, painting, scholarship, and calligraphy. In the early 1550s he finally acquired enough money to build a home at the base of the Chih-hsing Mountains, on the shores of Lake T'ai near Soochow, and for twenty-five years led a simple life of hermitage in the mountains, living until his eightieth year.

Soon after he built his house in the Chih-hsing Mountains, a friend named



No. 26. Garden Flowers. *Leaf I*, Morning Glory



No. 26. Garden Flowers. *Leaf H*, Day Lily and Chinese Aster

T'ao came to visit, bringing some plants for his garden. In return, Lu painted *Planting Chrysanthemums* (No. 27), and inscribed on it (top right) this poem:

*I hear you have opened up a "T'ao path" near the ocean,
Where clouds of leaves and frost-covered flowers vie in
wondrous splendor.
I too have built a new residence at Chih-hsing Mountain;
May I share some of your autumn colors by my eastern
hedge?*

(FONG AND HEARN, 1982, p. 53; modified)

This fortuitous interaction among T'ao, the friend whose name is also T'ao Ch'ien's; chrysanthemums, emblem of T'ao Ch'ien and of retirement; and autumn, season of chrysanthemums and of the visit, inspired Lu Chih to paint a gold and pale blue mountain paradise. It depicts his friend's arrival at the gate, with a servant carrying a tray of chrysanthemum seedlings, as Lu himself watches a boy planting the flowers along his fence. Beyond, a golden valley opens through the mountains like the grotto entrance to Peach Blossom Spring. For Lu Chih, like Ch'ien Hsüan, the peach blossom paradise is here, in the life of retirement, friendships, and quiet remote gardens.

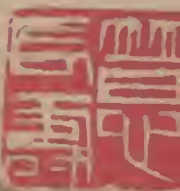
We will conclude this selection of garden and flower paintings by Soochow artists with two works by Hsiang Sheng-mo (1597–1658), a belated and indirect descendant of Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming. His grandfather, Hsiang Yüan-pien, was one of the greatest collectors of art in Chinese history, but the young Hsiang formed his art primarily on the model of Soochow. Typical of his early work is the album of landscapes and flower and bird paintings (of which four are exhibited) dated 1639, five years before the end of the Ming dynasty. Here are easy, informal sketches of plum blossoms; chrysanthemums; bamboo, frog, and lotus (No. 28); and swallow and wisteria—all loosely inspired by Ch'en Shun. His frog, recalling Southern Sung, is about to swallow a dragonfly; his plum blossoms are bathed in misty moonlight. These are fresh, simple images, staking out no new territory, but not trampling too closely in the ruts of predecessors.

Art of a different order is Hsiang's *White Chrysanthemum* (No. 29) of 1654. During the intervening fifteen years, powerful forces shook China. The Manchus invaded and occupied the country, the Ming were destroyed, and Hsiang was left without loyalties except to what was gone. White is the color of mourning.

That these events transformed Hsiang Sheng-mo's life is obvious; their specific effects upon his life and art have been demonstrated by Chu-ting Li (1976b, pp. 531–599). While no major change of style occurred, the meanings and purposes of his art changed radically and were invested with a new seriousness. Painting could not now be the casual self-amusement it had been. Morality and virtue were at issue, and to an *i-min* the nature of the image projected was a matter of great seriousness. *White Chrysanthemum* conveys an air of ethereality and purity. According to Yün Shou-p'ing, the great flower painter and contemporary of Hsiang, among the various colors of chrysanthemum yellow was the most highly esteemed, and purple second. White is not mentioned. The color of mourning, white is also the color of purity, as in plum blossoms' "pure whiteness of winter." The chrysanthemum, furthermore, a flower of lofty reclusiveness, was the symbol of T'ao Ch'ien, whose retirement from public life was the occasion of his



No. 27. **Planting Chrysanthemums** (ca. 1550). *Lu Chih* (1496–1576); hanging scroll, ink and pale color on paper; Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.5. Opposite: Detail





No. 28. Frog on a Lotus Leaf. Hsiang Sheng-mo (1597–1658); Leaf G from an album of eight leaves, dated 1639, ink and color on paper; Edward Elliott Family Collection; Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981; 1981.285.38



No. 29. **White Chrysanthemum**, dated 1654. Hsiang Sheng-mo (1597-1658); hanging scroll, light color on paper; Edward Elliott Family Collection; Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981; 1981.285.4

celebrated *Home Again!* Chu-tsing Li (1976b, p. 548) has reminded us of the kinds of poetry written by Hsiang in 1645/6, just after the Manchu conquest:

[*My friend*] *Yu-chien has a potted pine,
Old and strange in the extreme.
I love it, and now paint it:
Upset the pot, change the earth—
Its will is not deflected.*

On a picture of begonias:

*Spot by spot the spring colors are harmed.
How sad that the autumn shadows are cold.
Without a wind, the flowers still move of themselves;
They weep, and their tears never dry.*

The mournful songs of a patriot recall Ch'ien Hsüan, another *i-min* in another time, and the same ghostly beauty, faded, weeping.

Hsiang's signature on *White Chrysanthemum* says simply, "Painted ten days after the autumn equinox in the *chia-wu* year [1654], among the shadows of pines and paulownias."

Yün Shou-p'ing and the Art of Flower Painting

CONVENTIONALLY, the history of flower and bird painting in China begins, as we have noted, with the tenth-century masters Huang Ch'üan and Hsü Hsi; continues through the Sung Academy, with note taken of the literati masters Yang Pu-chih and Chao Meng-chien, and their followers in the Yüan period; pauses at the pale and restrained art of Ch'ien Hsüan and Wang Yüan; traces the revival of Sung academic styles in the Ming "academy"; and dwells upon the scholarly art of the Soochow masters. It also records the unconventional splashed-ink style of Hsü Wei, tracing it back to such late Sung Buddhist painters as Liang K'ai and Mu-ch'i.

Within this spectrum are many masterpieces of the genre, but very few painters whose achievements as artists of flower painting alone would justify comparison with the greatest masters of landscape painting. The mysterious *Bamboo in Snow*, vaguely attributed to Hsü Hsi, the progenitor, stands beside the greatest landscapes as a work of art utterly compelling in its power of vision; it also suggests how little we know of the beginnings, since it is a virtually isolated and undocumented work. So, too, Mu-ch'i's *Six Persimmons* suggests qualities of mind seen nowhere else in such convincing form; and perhaps Mu-ch'i's unhappy, eccentric heir, Hsü Wei, is the one painter after the tenth century who achieved the highest stature through the painting of flowers alone. Unfortunately, we are not able to include his work in this exhibition, reproducing instead a section of one of his several long handscrolls of flowers and vegetables (fig. 6). His investment of energy and emotion in his art is suggested by one of his poems on the painting of bamboo:

INSCRIBED ON A PAINTING OF WINDY BAMBOO,
TO BE PRESENTED TO TZU-KAN

*A gift for you should not be vulgar,
I paint for you bamboo in the wind.
Just listen to the topmost branches,
Is it the wind or someone weeping?
If only one could paint the windy bamboo as if weeping . . .*

(CHIANG YEE, 1975, p. 467)

Like Hsü Wei, if Yün Shou-p'ing (1633-1690) had never painted another subject than flowers, his stature as one of China's greatest artists would still be assured. In an age of astonishing creative energy and diversity, he is the supreme master of flower painting. Like Ch'ien Hsüan he was an *i-min*, a "leftover person"; like Shen Chou he was a modest and retiring man, intoxicated by the

Fig. 6. **Bamboo and Flowers.** *Hsü Wei* (1521–1593); section of handscroll, ink on paper; The Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



beauty and mystery of nature, and by man's capacity to create art that joins him to the process of life and transformation.

With his father, who was a Ming loyalist, and an older brother, Yün was engulfed in the catastrophe of the fall of the Ming. Captured by the Manchu general Ch'en Chin, his brother already dead, he was separated from his father, who believed him too to be dead. Yün was then adopted by Ch'en's wife, while his father, in mourning, became a Buddhist monk. Later, through a series of accidents and intercessions that became the subject of a popular drama, Yün and his father were reunited, and the young man vowed to devote himself to the ideals of his father. He lived to the age of fifty-seven as a painter and poet, supporting his father and his family with his art, dying in poverty. His old friend, the painter Wang Hui, paid for his funeral.

The exhibition includes five paintings that reflect his legacy of beauty, integrity, and modesty. He painted in many styles, often in ink alone, sometimes very simply and sketchily, but also in a rich, colorful, and formal manner that recalls the Sung Academy. Like his landscape painter friends, he explored the history of his genre, studying the masters of the past, emulating them or, more often, commenting upon their art with his own. He especially revered the Soochow masters Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming, T'ang Yin, and Ch'en Shun, naming them often in his inscriptions. The affinity of his art with Hsiang Sheng-mo's *White Chrysanthemum* reveals their common respect for the Soochow aesthetic. In addition, he refers frequently to the works of Ch'ien Hsüan and Wang Yüan, to whom the Soochow painters were also indebted. To the "boneless" style of pure color painting he gave new definition, usually following either the authority of Hsü Ch'ung-ssu and his father Hsü Hsi (whose paintings were probably no longer extant by that time) or more often the Northern Sung masters.

These references to earlier painters can be traced back to the specific models that influenced him, but he would not be accounted for by such an exercise. Few painters before him had sought so single-mindedly to give definition to the

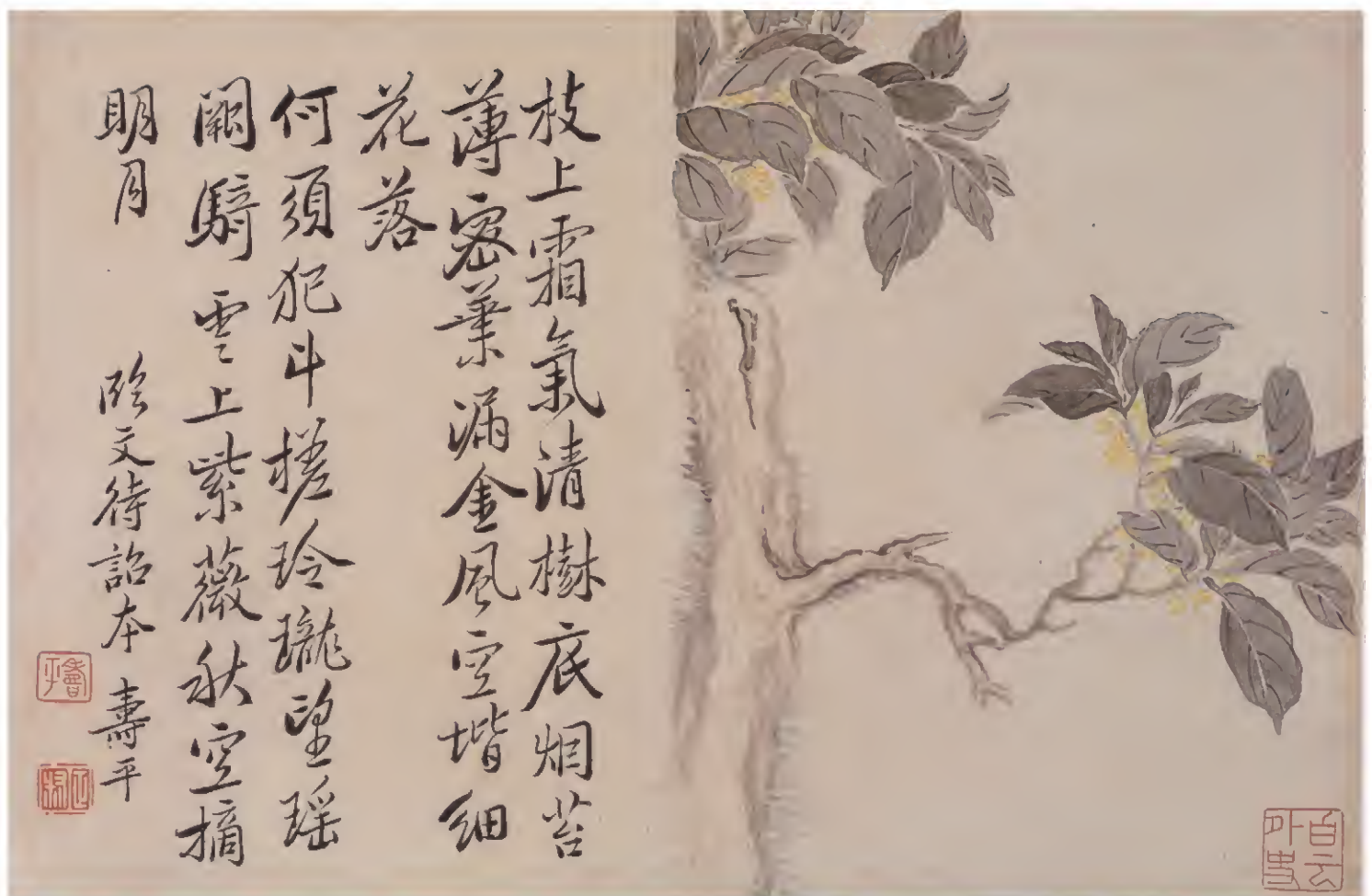
parameters of the genre, and to explore within it the full range of individual expressive possibilities. Consider his use of color. In his *Cassia Tree* (No. 30) only the small, pale yellow flowers clustered unassumingly beneath the broad leaves accent the gray ink wash and smoky brushwork of the tree and leaves. This restrained delicacy complements the images of his poems:

*On the branches a pristine breath of frost,
Below the tree, sparse and misty moss.
Dense leaves let through the golden wind,
Delicate flowers fall on the empty stairs.*

*Why must the Dipper Stars become obscured?
I gaze at the Seventh Star through a crystal screen.
Riding the clouds I go up to the Tzu-wei Star,
And from the autumn sky pluck the bright moon.*

(ELIZABETH BENNETT)

His final note says that the picture was “copied after Wen Cheng-ming,” but there is none of Wen’s agonized struggle and tension here, only golden wind wafting through dense leaves. Yün uses language and images metaphorically,



No. 30. *Cassia Tree*. Yün Shou-p'ing (1633-1690); album leaf, ink and color on paper; Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.

No. 31. *Carnations and Amaranthus*. Yün Shou-p'ing (1633-1690); folding fan mounted as album leaf, ink and color on paper; Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.; L.1981.126.43



seeing the frosted old boughs of the tree as a crystal screen through which the stars are glimpsed, and the yellow, delicate flowers as the golden autumn wind drifting through deserted chambers. His poem recalls the poetry of Ch'ien Hsüan, and is typical of the use of language by several of the finest seventeenth-century painters, including Shih-t'ao (see below). A good deal more than the scent of flowers is embodied in their expression.

In his fan composition, *Carnation and Amaranthus* (No. 31), transparent tonalities of green and pink sweep the ivory paper in an image of diaphanous fragility. The amaranthus is called "old youth" in China; youth and age drift by us in the breeze from the moving fan.

In *Tree Peonies* (No. 32), Yün creates a lush composition of pink, violet, white, olive green, and red, in an image of luxuriant beauty and fullness. In his typical pattern, the composition swells out from a dense center of rock, blossoms, and thick leaves, loosening gradually until only pale tendrils seem to drift out toward his poetic inscription. This is the artist at his most polished and formal, creating a new "academic" style that, in the hands of such followers as Tsou I-kuei, became the Ch'ing court style of flower painting—not the only irony in the life of this retiring Ming loyalist.

Since the beginning of the use of flower imagery in China, floral beauty has been interchangeable with the beauty of women. Chou Mi's poem to the narcissus plays poignantly upon this interaction, as does Ch'ien Hsüan's poem on *Pear Blossoms* (both are discussed above). This phenomenon is apparently intrinsic to thought and language in China, since nearly every written character describing beauty in any of its nuances and aspects has a female radical and hence belongs to the category of feminine imagery. The entire range of words denoting beauty in China, from charm and grace to sensuousness and ripeness, is appli-

cable in fact only to women, flowers, and fruit. There is thus a strong element of eroticism built into the depiction of flowers, and it was celebrated by many of the finest painters of the subject, including Yün Shou-p'ing.

His poem on *Tree Peonies* subtly creates an experience of the erotic imagination, drawing images of palatial chambers, silver candles, and a beautiful dancer, all sensed in the aristocratic, sensual beauty of the peony:

*A modest spring beauty with songs and flutes in the boudoir
Copper trays and silver candles reflect the flowery cushion.
In diaphanous gown of brocade, pieced and cut on the loom,
Newly arrived, this one dances marvelously in the palm of
my hand.*

(MARILYN FU; modified)

How sweetly the cut flower held in his hand is conceived as a lovely woman dancing in the palm! Such phrases as “dancer in my palm” and “pearl in my palm” refer to favorite concubines, and hence to lovers in general. In this context, the flower is flesh, its fragrance perfume, its colors a diaphanous brocade gown. There is scarcely an effort of the imagination here; the double identity seems to be both instinctive and cultural.

Yün's distinctive style of soft, smooth washes of color; liquid, graceful line; and lush, spacious compositions eventually won such popularity that it seems to have become nearly inseparable from the very representation of flowers. Like a master craftsman, Yün himself probably worked so slowly and deliberately, and for an audience so restricted by him to the morally acceptable few, that his family was left in poverty at his death. Even before his death, however, the great appeal of his art was providing a substantial income for numerous followers and imitators, as it has continued to do until recent times. His daughter, Yün Ping, was a sensitive and skillful practitioner of the family manner, and the names of dozens of other followers through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are recorded. *One Hundred Flowers* (No. 33), a long handscroll that must delight every flower gardener with its tapestry of beauty, is presumably the work of one such heir. The painter has so thoroughly absorbed the nuances of Yün's idiom that he presents them unconsciously in every detail, as if flowers themselves had become synonymous with the art and style of Yün Shou-p'ing.

Yün is known to have constantly sketched from nature; indeed, he could only have captured so perfectly the specific and detailed characteristics of so many diverse flowers by long and careful study of the plants themselves. In this he differs from such friends as Wang Hui, the orthodox landscape painter who followed Tung Ch'i-ch'ang in deriving primary inspiration from art itself. This preference for realism may explain why Yün preferred flowers over landscape, although he was a sensitive and gentle landscapist, too. Another reason is quite likely the relative freedom from orthodox expectations that the subject allowed him. Within his circle, all painters of landscape, past and present, had been classified into correct and incorrect traditions. The flower and bird genre had been ignored, however, and was therefore relatively open to exploration and interpretation. It must have been an inviting opening for Yün. He clearly wished the freedom to find his own way, to experiment with techniques that lay outside the sphere of orthodoxy, and to pursue an aesthetic that landscape, as defined within

his milieu, did not allow. Deferring to the unsurpassable genius of Wang Hui in landscape painting was more likely a pretext by which he declined to be bound to the arbitrary parameters of a choking orthodoxy.

Color, for example, is of limited range and function in orthodox painting of the seventeenth century. Realistic description is also of dubious value. Flowing washes of ink or color had little presence, and the correct models for techniques and composition were well known and rigidly defined. Yün, on the other hand, loved color, pure color, rich and intense; he revered the reality of flowers, their sensuous, dazzling beauty; he liked to let his ink wash and color flow out like an irresistible stream over his pictures; and the correct models had not been defined, or did not exist (for example, Hsü Ch'ung-ssu, his ubiquitous model, had no extant works), so he was free to invent them.

Lotuses on a Summer Evening (No. 34) is a celebration of the visceral, sensual, breathtaking experience of nature, and of the sheer intoxication of creative energy—a work of art that no orthodox landscape master could conceive as appropriate to explore (but see below, for an answering work by the untrammelled Shih-t'ao). In the note following his inscribed poem he says: “In the long summer of the *chia-tzu* year [1684] at the Green Stream water pavilion, I watched the lotuses, and got this idea: casually dotting and washing with my brush, I captured the elation of the experience without seeking the likeness of the flowers.” He describes this elation in the poem:

*Suspended shadows, thin stalks toy with clouds and rippling
water,
A scented breeze seems to rise off the Ink Pond.
Dew wets red garments, golden powder falls,
Like dusky fragrance, a worn body receives their cool wind.*

Lush, glittering colors soaked in wafting mist, swaying stalks and heavy looming pods like shadows in the air, lingering fragrance and cool breeze from the water—these effects the painter seeks and finds, without pursuing careful likeness of form. Savoring the process of flowing colors, waving stalks, and rippling water grass, and using wet-on-wet brushwork in the lower leaves like mist soaking the colors, he builds the experience re-created until it provides an irresistible impression of the most generous of flowers on a hot summer day.

To join and merge the experience of nature and the reliving of that experience in the sensual kinesthetic motions of brush and color is a rare achievement for any artist. For Yün Shou-p'ing it must have been a self-conscious breakthrough into a region he had rarely seen before. First, he notes, came the idea of process, of experience that might be transmuted into art, as he sat watching the flowers, feeling the breeze. Then he chose his materials and format: a huge scroll of paper, making *Lotuses on a Summer Evening* one of the largest works on paper from the period. Normally Yün worked on a small scale; for formal pictures he preferred medium-sized silk, as in his *Tree Peonies*. The lotus painting was clearly to be, from the outset, an ambitious, free, experimental work for his own purposes. Paper was chosen because it interacts with brush, ink, and color differently from silk, allowing more freedom and more graphic, textured surfaces and effects. The work itself, probably surprising even Yün with its success, was regarded by him with pride; his bold, free, strongly written inscription suggests

No. 32. **Tree Peonies**, dated 1688. Yün Shou-p'ing (1633-1690); hanging scroll, ink and color on silk; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse, 1972; 1972.16



No. 33. **One Hundred Flowers.** *Attributed to Yün Shou-p'ing (1633-1690); handscroll, ink and color on silk; Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.; L.1981.126.42. Opposite: Detail, Chrysanthemums. Clockwise: Details, Flowering Plum, Orchid, and Chinese Roses; Wisteria; Narcissus and Rose; Chinese Pinks, Butter-and-eggs, and Plumbagos*







No. 34. **Lotuses on a Summer Evening**,
 dated 1684. Yün Shou-p'ing (1633-1690);
 hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; Gift
 of Marie-Hélène and Guy Weill, in honor of
 Professor Wen Fong, 1982; 1982.470

the enormously pleased, slightly stunned manner of a virtuoso performer who suddenly realizes that he has just surpassed even his own highest expectations.

Both image and poem are rich in nuance. The color red recalls the Ming imperial family, surnamed Chu, “red” or “vermilion.” Golden powder is another imperial symbol. The lotus is preeminently a floral medium of transition from one realm of existence into another, associated with the Buddha. The Buddhist faithful are reborn in heaven through the petals of a lotus, which grows from murky pools into the clear air. Like peach blossoms, therefore, the lotus flower marks the passage into paradise. For a man like Yün Shou-p’ing, suspended between two dynasties, two lives, two identities, it was an especially meaningful emblem.

In paintings like *Lotuses on a Summer Evening*, Yün Shou-p’ing goes far beyond the limits of orthodoxy. As in all of his most distinctive pictures, he seems to catch a surge of inspiration that carries him into a realm of experience in which reality and emotion are a single thing, clearly seen as such. If Yün, modest, retiring, poor, overworked, and frail man that he was, too seldom found it possible to realize this goal, his younger contemporary Shih-t’ao lived and flourished in pursuit of it. He is the free spirit of his age, and in all of his painting he seeks the inseparability of mind, experience, nature, and art. Certainly he, better than most painters of the time, would have understood exactly what Yün had achieved in *Lotuses on a Summer Evening*.



Drunk in Autumn Woods:

Shih-t'ao and the

Painters of Yangchow

UNDER THE MANCHU DYNASTY, the city of Yangchow became a thriving commercial center and headquarters of the government salt monopoly. Until then it could boast of little cultural distinction. Beginning, however, in the last decades of the seventeenth century, it emerged as the most vital urban center in China, replacing Soochow as the artistic capital and arbiter of culture. The painter Shih-t'ao (also known as Tao-chi, 1642–1707) lived there for a time in the 1680s and his permanent move to the city in the 1690s marks the beginning of the city's artistic resurgence. The young painter Kao Hsiang became his friend, as did Kao Feng-han; they in turn became typical of the eccentric painters of Yangchow through the eighteenth century, and all were heirs of Shih-t'ao. Along with his art and the art of his followers in the city, Yangchow was celebrated for its gaiety, its flower boats and fine restaurants, its superb gardens, and its wealth. Its art market flourished; certainly one reason Shih-t'ao chose to settle there as a professional painter was the expectation that he would find a thriving audience for his art. The city honored eccentricity, originality, and skill; and Shih-t'ao was undoubtedly the most eccentric, original, and skillful painter of his time.

He wrote three separate inscriptions on his painting *Drunk in Autumn Woods* (No. 35), an indication of the pleasure the work brought him. He painted it in the early eighteenth century, probably 1702, to commemorate an outing he made with some friends into the autumn hills. The landscape, with pavilions, paths, and bridges, is more like a small park or garden. The friends, recalling Wang Hsi-chih and the Orchid Pavilion, wandered about enjoying the autumn foliage, drank wine, composed poems, got drunk, fell asleep. Their activities are illustrated by Shih-t'ao in the intoxicating setting of the year's end. His inscriptions testify to the pride he took in his achievement: "In an instant, mists and clouds can return to their primeval form; red trees fill the skies spreading fire through the heavens. I invite you, sir, to get very drunk on my black brushstrokes; lie down and watch the frosted forest as falling leaves swirl." His theme is intoxication: the exhilaration of wine and autumn woods, of creativity, friendship, and madness: "I have three kinds of madness: I am mad, my words are mad, and my painting is mad" (ASCHWIN LIPPE, 1962, p. 159; modified). The chaotic, vibrating autumn woods appear as the "ten thousand dots of vermilion and orange" requested by Sung-kao (the poet Mao Chi-k'o, 1633–1708, for whom the picture was done). Within the woods, young and old figures, strangely misshapen, seen

Left: No. 35. *Drunk in Autumn Woods. Detail*



No. 35. *Drunk in Autumn Woods*. Shih-t'ao (1642-1707); hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.; L.1981.126.53

No. 36. Hibiscus and Lotus. Shih-t'ao
(1642-1707); hanging scroll, ink on
paper; Purchase, Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
David M. Levitt, by exchange, 1978;
1978.254



as if through a haze of wine, are engaged here and there in the casual activities of a fall picnic.

Like Yün Shou-p'ing seeking to portray and express the elation afforded him by the wind from the lotuses, Shih-t'ao attempts to create an image and a style embodying the idea of intoxication. He was often drunk on the experience of art, nature, and life, and was always quite mad. Far more versatile than Yün, he excelled in all subjects, and in all avoided the familiar pathways in search of the fresh and new. Nevertheless, much of his art is focused upon gardens and flowers, and in his well-known self-portrait he presents the image of himself instructing a young boy and a monkey in the planting of pine trees in his garden. His flower paintings rival Yün's for sheer sensual beauty, and are often images of complex personal association. Flowers held important meanings for Shih-t'ao, and he turned to them frequently for expression of aesthetic views and for reflections on his life and the process of aging. Especially in his late years, the traditional role of beautiful flowers as images of beautiful women became for him occasion to consider his waning but still recurring passions. On his painting of *Hibiscus and Lotus* (No. 36) he wrote:

*As I grow older, I have stopped having lush dreams;
Even one hibiscus tree by the pond is too much for me!*

(MAXWELL K. HEARN)

The phrase here translated as "lush dreams" literally means "dreams of variegated flowers," and implies dreams of sexual experiences. Quoting the Sung poet Su Shih for the subject, the old painter portrays himself as past such passionate experiences, but still moved to sensuality by the sight of a few flowers near the pond. The painting itself is a passionate, wet, exuberant creation of the kind Shih-t'ao painted only after mid-life. In his youth and early maturity Shih-t'ao was a Buddhist monk, and he probably had few, if any, relationships with women for the first fifty years of his life. Later he returned to secular life, and it is clear from his art that he was sometimes troubled by his sensual nature.

In an album of *Flowers* in the Sackler Collections, New York (No. 37), painted during the final decade of his life, he dwells lovingly on his favorite flowers: a peony wet with summer rain, recalling in his poem the lovely ladies of the ancient imperial courts (Leaf D); a lotus with highly suggestive red polygonum beside; hibiscus at twilight. His poems dwell upon sensual nuances: delicate textures, subtle fragrance, gentle rain, warm breezes—the familiar and euphemistic language of lovemaking. The final leaf of the album, here as usual the key to thematic content, depicts the classic yin-yang combination of feminine plum blossom and masculine bamboo (Leaf H). His poem is explicit and affecting:

*Where to find a hundred thousand [plum trees] in the
spring wind?
The branches shining on me make me drunk and blissful.
Their hidden fragrance touches and awakes the poet—
When their marvelous beauty blooms, it makes an old man
feel the spring.
My feelings are so full, it is almost unbearable—
These passions don't come often, yet still I am lonely.*



No. 37. Peonies. Shih-t'ao (1642-1707); Leaf D from an album of nine leaves, ink and color on paper; The Arthur M. Sackler Collections



No. 37. Plum and Bamboo. Shih-t'ao (1642-1707);
 Leaf H from an album of nine leaves, ink and color on paper;
 The Arthur M. Sackler Collections



No. 38. Peach Blossoms. Shih-t'ao (1642-1707); Leaf F
from an album of twelve leaves, ink and color on paper;
The Sackler Fund, 1972; 1972.122f

*At dawn I scratch my head in wonder in front of the
courtyard looking [at the flowers]:
How could anybody think that I am only an old useless
scholar?*

(MARILYN AND SHEN FU, 1973, p. 241)

For Shih-t'ao, the flowers were reminders of the sensual passions of his youth, almost gone now in himself, but remembered and revived with every flowering season.

Shih-t'ao's wet, shimmering technique is particularly appropriate for the nuances of light and atmosphere he sought in his pictures. In the poem that he wrote on his *Peonies* he describes the flower wet with rain, its fragrance captured in the wind; the image itself seems bathed in a fresh shower. Even his inscription seems wet, as if washed with the same gentle summer rain.

Symbolizing always the most aristocratic, colorful beauty, the aesthetic of the imperial court, the peony is the king of flowers. The hibiscus, in contrast, is a flower of modesty and retirement, like the orchid and chrysanthemum. Hidden and often remote, its pale yellow blossom and subtle fragrance embody nuances of beauty and virtue especially attractive to retired scholars. Shih-t'ao's poem emphasizes these qualities:

*It doesn't imitate the color of peach blossoms
And its yellow is not the same as the willow leaves.
A fragrant heart—where can it be?
At dusk it turns toward the setting sun.*

(FU, 1973, p. 241)

The yellow flower inclined toward the sunset is touched by the painter with tints of russet that suggest the dying light of day.

These warm, rich images are made to seem even more so when contrasted with flowers from another album by Shih-t'ao. In *Wilderness Colors*, the artist explores the aesthetic of "rawness" (*sheng*) using raw paper, raw colors, images of raw or spicy foods, and blunt, raw techniques. The leaf in the exhibition, *Peach Blossoms* (No. 38), returns us to the sensuous memories of the old painter. Each petal of the brilliant flower is done in a single, rich stroke of graded color; the poetic inscription ripples with frank and sheer sensual flourish. Raw purity and freshness are the qualities he captures, and they are particularly well suited to the peach blossom, one of Shih-t'ao's favorite flowers, and one that usually evoked personal reflection, as in the present poem:

*Spring breeze and gentle rain come to the window of my
mountain lodge;
Even now, I paint peach blossoms in their colorful attire.
I laugh at myself that in spite of old age I have not learned
to live with leisure,
And must still play with my brush to pass the time.*

(WEN FONG AND MARILYN FU, 1973, no. 6)

The poem, like the image, is frank and direct, "raw": "Why am I still doing this?" he asks; "I'm too old for it." Perhaps, as Marilyn Fu and Wen Fong sug-

gest, he was embarrassed at the knowledge that his sensuous, passionate instincts for youthful charm and beauty had not entirely faded. His peach blossoms, eternal symbols of youth, pleasure, and gaiety, are young girls in colorful attire, dancing in the wind. They recall T'ang Yin, another professional painter, with whom Shih-t'ao has a curious affinity. T'ang had built himself a modest "Peach Blossom Retreat," lived a debauched life among singing girls and flower boats, and loved to paint peach blossoms. He once described his life (SIRÉN, 1956-58, pl. 228) as a half century of the same intoxication that gave Shih-t'ao pride:

*Drunken dancing, mad singing for fifty years,
Finding pleasure among the flowers, sleeping in the moon.*

This is the romantic peach blossom that Shih-t'ao portrays, and T'ang Yin is undoubtedly recalled in the dancing branch.

There are artists who expand the boundaries of art, and others who restrict them. With Shih-t'ao it seems almost as if there were no boundaries, as if he did not acknowledge them. He was a maker of images, and formed them out of emotional states. If adequate techniques did not exist he invented them, as he invented the techniques with which to convey an image of intoxication; an image of peonies wet with rain, exuding fragrance; an image of hibiscus inclining toward the setting sun; of peach blossoms sensually evoking fresh youth and beauty. When he painted *The Grotto of Chang Tao-ling* (No. 39), he borrowed a composition by Shen Chou, but created from it a different image entirely. Shen had painted a topographic likeness of the famous grotto, in the spirit of his frequent scenes of Soochow and vicinity. Shih-t'ao followed almost every detail of the Shen Chou painting, but invested the image with a mystical emphasis on its identity as the source of eternal spring. Using springlike hues of yellow, orange, and green, he transformed a rather staid, dry, topographical likeness into a glowing picture of the birth of spring from the rock grottoes of the immortals.

It is thanks to Wolfgang Bauer that we now realize how significant the idea of the grotto was to Taoist thought. The cave symbolized a passageway, through the rocks, through space and time; and the passage was a journey, toward enlightenment and happiness, toward renewal and rebirth. The "cave heavens" (*tung-t'ien*) and "cave palaces" (*tung-t'ing*) of the Taoist immortals are the rock grottoes of the Chinese garden, and the physical paradise reached through the grotto is the garden itself.

This is the image conveyed by Shih-t'ao. Chang Tao-ling, a Han Taoist immortal and patriarch of the Taoist church, lived in the cave that bears his name, located near I-hsing on the shores of Lake T'ai in Kiangsu province. Like all great grottoes, it is a famed site, invested with mystery that goes beyond mere curiosity. As Shih-t'ao portrays it, the "dragon-toothed" opening is suffused with color:

*Within Master Chang's grotto there is no one,
Within Master Chang's grotto spring wind arises.
The spring wind knows not whence it comes,
Only that it is born to blow on thousands of men, ten
thousands of men.*

The Chinese quest for paradise has always involved magic grottoes, blossoming





No. 39. *The Grotto of Chang Tao-ling*. Shih-t'ao (1642–1707); handscroll, ink and color on paper; Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982; 1982.126. Detail

flowers, and a consciousness of passage from one realm of existence to another. It was a theme of abiding interest to Shih-t'ao, who several times painted the Peach Blossom Spring, and was fascinated with grottoes, gardens, and passages. *The Grotto of Chang Tao-ling* is for him the ultimate metaphor: within it are eternal spring, the gardens of paradise.

Also living and working in Yangchow by 1690 to 1746 or so was a brilliant young native of the city named Yüan Chiang. He was the center of a group of professional painters active there for about seventy-five years, presumably in an atelier of some kind. Besides Yüan Chiang the group included Li Yin (active 1694–1707), and four painters surnamed Yüan who were probably sons, nephews, or adopted sons: Yüan Yao, Yüan Hsüeh, Yüan Jun, and Yüan Shao. Two other professional painters of Yangchow, Hsiao Ch'en (ca. 1680–1710) and Wang Yün (1652–1735 or later), may also have been involved with the group. It is estimated that there are several hundred paintings by the Yüan family extant today, but to my knowledge only one of them bears the date of a specific imperial reign period. Since the cyclical dating system used on the others could be mistaken by sixty-year intervals, there is considerable uncertainty about their chronology. However, the one securely dated painting presently known, and also apparently the earliest dated work by any of the Yüan family, is *The Chiu-ch'eng Palace* (No. 40), recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum. Dated in the *hsin wei* year of the reign of K'ang-hsi (1691), this twelve-panel hanging scroll measures 94½ inches by 19 feet overall. It was regarded as one of the largest portable paintings of the seventeenth century until, more recently, another twelve-panel composition of *The Peach Blossom Spring* (No. 41) came to light. Even larger and dated 1719, it is now in a private collection. Also now in the Metropolitan Museum is a beautiful garden handscroll identified as *The Chan-yüan* (roughly, the "Gazing Garden"), said to have been in the city of Nanking (No. 42). With these paintings it is possible to sketch the contribution of Yüan Chiang to the later history of Chinese painting.

Since Yüan Chiang lived until at least 1746, the date of his latest known work, painted fifty-five years after *The Chiu-ch'eng Palace*, the latter is the astonishing achievement of a young prodigy. He could not have been much more than twenty when he painted it. Despite his borrowings from such Nanking professionals as Wu Hung, Fan Ch'i (see No. 1), and Wu Pin, as well as a distant debt to Ch'iu Ying, the young Yüan Chiang already offers a unique and idiosyncratic vision. This vision, if not the technique, is modeled upon the monumental landscapes of Northern Sung (960–1126), but in the manner of fantasy, rather than of the ideal and moral. Surreal is the term sometimes applied to the bizarre fantasies of Wu Pin, but Yüan Chiang's art is not surreal. Concerned with imaginary paradises; glittering, drifting palaces and gardens; and the isles of immortality, his is a visionary dreamworld. Yüan Chiang paints a romantic dream in something approaching a realistic style. There is little or nothing in his art that seems psychologically disturbing, as sometimes there is in the art of Wu Pin.

The Chiu-ch'eng Palace is typical. The palace itself, an historical reality, was built during the Sui dynasty (589–618) as an imperial residence, partially destroyed and later rebuilt under the T'ang (618–908) as an imperial summer palace, and still later destroyed permanently. It is thus created, or re-created, from the imagination of the painter. In detail, Yüan Chiang's representation resembles

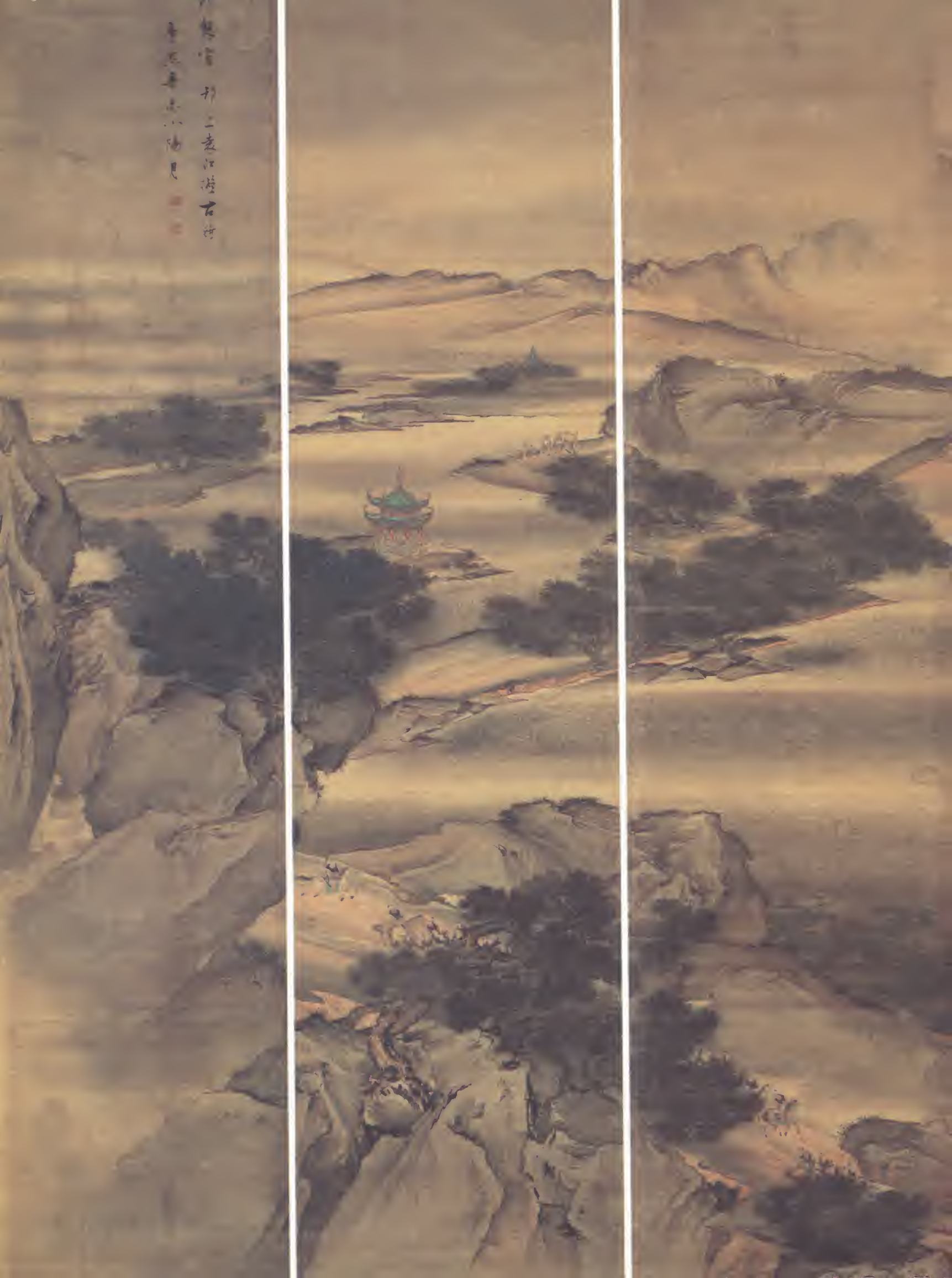


Inside: No. 40. **The Chiu-ch'eng Palace**, dated 1691.
Yüan Chiang (active ca. 1690–ca. 1746); twelve hanging
scrolls, ink and color on silk; Purchase, *The Dillon Fund*
Gift, 1982; 1982.125a–l

Preceding Page: No. 40. **The Chiu-ch'eng Palace**. *Detail*

Page 111: No. 40. **The Chiu-ch'eng Palace**. *Detail*

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the summer palaces of the Manchu emperors at Peking, and adds to the exhibition a view of the garden at its most sumptuous and extravagant. The imperial summer palaces always suggest the islands and mountains of immortality, P'eng-lai, Fang-hu, and the Peach Blossom Spring. They differ from the scholar's garden only in scale, and the mighty Ch'ien-lung emperor (1711-1799) sounds very much like the humblest scholar when he writes: "Every emperor or ruler must, upon retiring from his official duties and audiences, have a garden in which to stroll, to look around and have rest for his heart. If he has a suitable place for this, it has a refreshing effect upon his mind and regulates his feelings, but if not, he becomes engrossed in sensual pleasures and loses his strength of will" (SIRÉN, 1949, p. 120).

In Yüan Chiang's imaginary paradise gaily dressed women and children gather serenely in high pavilions in preparation for a festive celebration that is to take place in the central building. There, attendants are in readiness, awaiting a large party of horsemen riding colorfully with banners, weapons, and lanterns, from the left side along the lower roadway. A second party distantly appears at the far left. Curiously, the road, which is consistent and readable through the left six panels, becomes invisible in the right six, so that the pavilions are adrift in dreamlike isolation. The marble stairway to the central palace emerges from a lotus pond and the women's palace to the right is locked into a mountain, blocked by clouds and rock. The buildings are well populated, so they are accessible—but not to us.

In Yüan Chiang's three paintings the theme of the rock grotto is prominent. Rocks surround and protect paradise; we must pass through them to attain it. In *Peach Blossom Spring* this is, of course, the major theme; but in both the *Chan-yüan* and the *Chiu-ch'eng Palace* it is a subtheme returned to again and again. The Lake T'ai garden rock is a microcosm of the principle, the *Chan-yüan* an extended variation on the theme, and the *Chiu-ch'eng Palace* a symphony.

One unequivocal achievement of Yüan Chiang is his preeminence, in all of Ch'ing art, in the painting of architectural subjects, "palaces and buildings." In his expert use of perspective and his painstaking attention to details of design, structure, and decoration, he is unequalled in the dynasty. Unfortunately, by then such subjects were considered by many to be the province of craftsmen and entertainers only, and Yüan was accorded little esteem. It is an old story in China. Chang Tse-tuan, the painter of *Spring Festival on the River*, the most realistic record of life in twelfth-century China, would be unknown were it not for the chance survival of his masterpiece; there are no records of his life. Similarly, the brilliant young Wang Hsi-meng, who painted *Ten Thousand Miles of River and Mountains* at the age of eighteen for Emperor Hui-tsung, is also all but unrecorded, known merely by chance survival. Yüan Chiang recalls both masters, in the realism of detail and the expert depiction of man-made structures on the one hand, and in the technical brilliance and ambition of his *Chiu-ch'eng Palace* on the other. It is a young man's work, charming, visionary, romantic, the image of an artist who possessed the rare capacity to create a world unmistakably his own, and to do so on a huge scale. At least a dozen sets of similar twelvefold compositions by Yüan Chiang and Yüan Yao exist; they recall the monumental scale preferred by such Sung artists as Kuo Hsi—who is frequently mentioned by both, and whom they obviously emulated.

The *Chan-yüan* is a more mature, less imaginative work, and also a composition of a very different kind in that it attempts to record in detail the actual appearance of a specific garden—to paint its portrait. This subgenre of painting had been popularized by the Soochow masters and continued to be favored through the seventeenth century, especially in the hands of such artists as Chang Hung. The painter effaces himself in the service of thoroughness of detail and realistic description, and so one sees less of Yüan Chiang than of the *Chan-yüan*. As a portrait, however, it is a valuable record of an otherwise lost Manchu garden of Nanking in the early eighteenth century.

For over fifty years, unmentioned by the establishment, uncelebrated by the elite, Yüan went on with a consistent vision, painting his strong, accomplished pictures probably on commission: so much per yard of silk. For the most part, we can only guess at his patrons. He did know the eccentric finger painter and Manchu official Kao Ch'i-p'ei, who once invited him to his house to make finished pictures from Kao's split-fingernail sketches. Many of Yüan's pictures are dedicated to specific individuals, but I am not aware that any of them can be identified. Salt merchants, transport officers, local officials, shop owners—these must have been, on the whole, his patrons; and to them he offered a colorful world of jade gardens and fairy palaces that were as close as they could come to a glimpse of paradise.

The production of Yüan Chiang and his atelier was enormous, yet the works bearing his signature or that of Yüan Yao are of consistently high quality and careful refinement. Some idea of the production rate of the studio can be gleaned from the fact that at least two of his typical paintings, one in the Palace Museum, Peking, and one in the National Arts Gallery, Peking, bear exactly the same date: two days after the summer solstice, 1698. Presumably they were both finished and signed on that day, not done from start to finish; still, this is a telling fact. Again, in the Palace Museum, Peking, are two sets of twelve-panel compositions like the Metropolitan Museum's *Chiu-ch'eng Palace*. They were both painted in 1723, one set in the second lunar month, and the other in the fourth month. Also from the evidence of his signatures and inscriptions, it has been determined that his pictures were painted not only in Yangchow (the vast majority) but in Nanking and Peking; according to an old local tradition, he was also in Shansi province for a long period.

It is evident, in any case, that a substantial studio was involved. The *Chan-yüan* exists in two nearly identical versions, indicating that duplicates were made in the studio. Very similar variations on compositional themes exist among the works of the atelier, suggesting the production of related sets or groups of pictures on a common theme. Recent scholarship concludes that Yüan Yao was a full generation or more younger than Yüan Chiang, dating his works to the period from 1739 to 1778. I suspect, however, because of the extraordinarily close correspondence between their styles and subject matter, that they were almost exact contemporaries. Yüan Yao's works would thus be dated to the period of the 1690s through the 1750s. Yüan Chiang and Yüan Yao may have been brothers, and the atelier administered by both men, with the assistance of Yüan Hsüeh, Yüan Shao, and others.

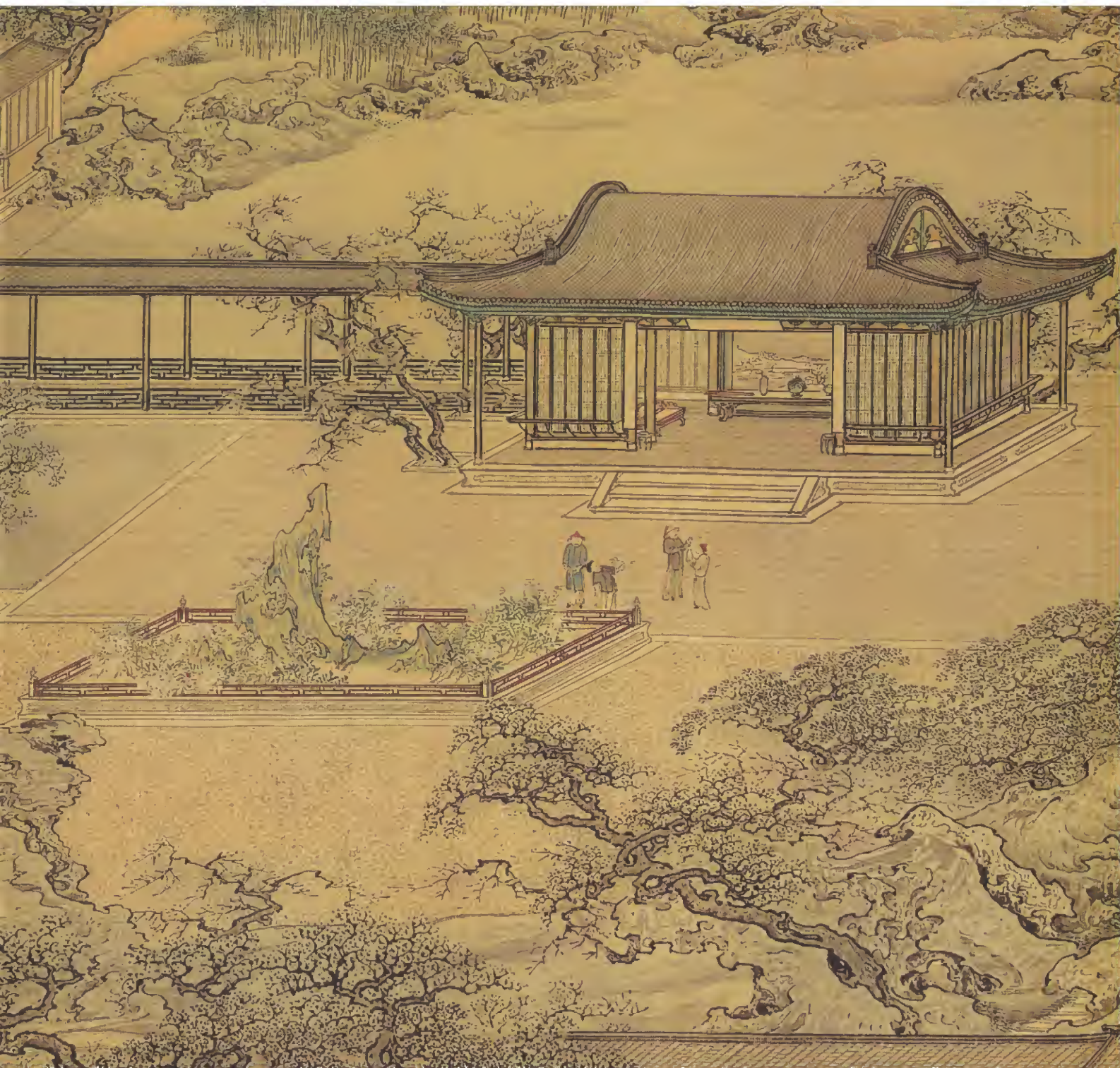
One of the mysteries of Yüan Chiang's life is his connection with the imperial court. His brief biographies report that he was appointed court painter during the Yung-cheng period (1723–1735), along with Yüan Yao, and served in the





No. 41. **Peach Blossom Spring**, dated 1719. Yüan Chiang (active ca. 1690–ca. 1746); twelve hanging scrolls, ink and color on silk; Anonymous loan





No. 42. View of a Garden Villa (The Chan-yüan). Yüan Chiang (active ca. 1690–ca. 1746); handscroll, ink and color on silk; Gift of Constance Tang Fong in honor of her mother, Mrs. P. Y. Tang, 1982; 1982.461. Details

“Outer Yang-hsin Hall.” Conversely, only one dated painting from the long period of 1727 to 1743 is known, and it gives no indication of having been done on appointment as court painter; some have questioned whether he served at court at all, the position taken in the most recent Chinese study (CHÜ CH’UNG-CHENG, 1982). The answer, perhaps, is found on a painting by Yüan Chiang in the collection of William Ahern of East Providence. On it is found a large seal of I-ch’in-wang, the thirteenth son of Emperor Sheng-tsu. The first Prince I was enfeoffed in 1623 and died in 1630. He could therefore have used the seal *I-ch’in Wang pao* only during the period 1623 to 1630, and it is likely that Yüan Chiang painted the Ahern picture for him then. In that event, Yüan’s appointment may have been to the entourage of Prince I, not the Inner Court, and the term “Outer Yang-hsin Hall” should be read “On appointment outside the Yang-hsin Hall.” One of Prince I’s major appointments was to the river conservancy in Chihli province. The Ahern painting is a detailed, realistic depiction of a river area, perhaps indicating that one of Yüan Chiang’s commissions from Prince I was to paint realistic study-records of the river arteries of Chihli, so that policy recommendations could be made from them.

While Yüan Chiang and his atelier went on working quietly, a good deal of excitement began to emanate from another artistic quarter of Yangchow. The gardens there were quite different from the visionary palaces of the Yüans, as reflected in Lo P’ing’s *Drinking in the Bamboo Garden* (No. 43). The modest single-walled court, set behind a partially thatched cottage, provides the simplest possible setting for a celebration of the first full moon of the new year; the date corresponds to February 1773. Lanterns are hung as family and friends gather to drink warm wine in the moonlight and to toast the new year. In the garden are only bamboo, pine, and rock; looming leafless trees from neighboring gardens rise in the mist that drifts all around, enclosing the small garden court.

Lo P’ing (1733–1799) was the youngest of the remarkable group of individualists remembered as “the eccentric painters of Yangchow,” who were active through the eighteenth century. On the spectrum of artistic behavior, they are on the left, seeking freedom from the constraints of tradition in subject matter and in style. Each was noted for a particular subject—Lo P’ing for his ghosts, Chin Nung for plum blossoms, Hua Yen for his birds, Huang Shen for his ancient immortals, Li Shan for flowers, Cheng Hsieh for bamboo. Most of them were extremely versatile, however; in particular, Lo P’ing and Hua Yen were among the most skillful artists of the time.

None of Lo P’ing’s skill is disguised in *Drinking in the Bamboo Garden*. It is stylistically quite close even to the art of Wang Hui, although he was the most celebrated of the “orthodox” artists still active in the early eighteenth century; but the informal, personal subject matter—certainly occasioned by an actual gathering, and one that no doubt looked much as we see it—is typical of the Yangchow masters. The mood is suggested in a poem, “The Small Garden,” written by another of the eccentrics, Lo’s friend Cheng Hsieh:

*Moonlight, harsh and clear, floods the high pavilion.
The night still young, the wicket gate is half open.
A lantern moving among trees announces the guest’s arrival.
Smoke rises from the bamboos in answer to my call for tea.*



No. 43. *Drinking in the Bamboo Garden*, dated 1773. Lo P'ing (1733–1799); hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper; John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913; 13.220.34



No. 44. Plum Blossoms. *Leaf C*, Plum Blossoms at Ku-shan



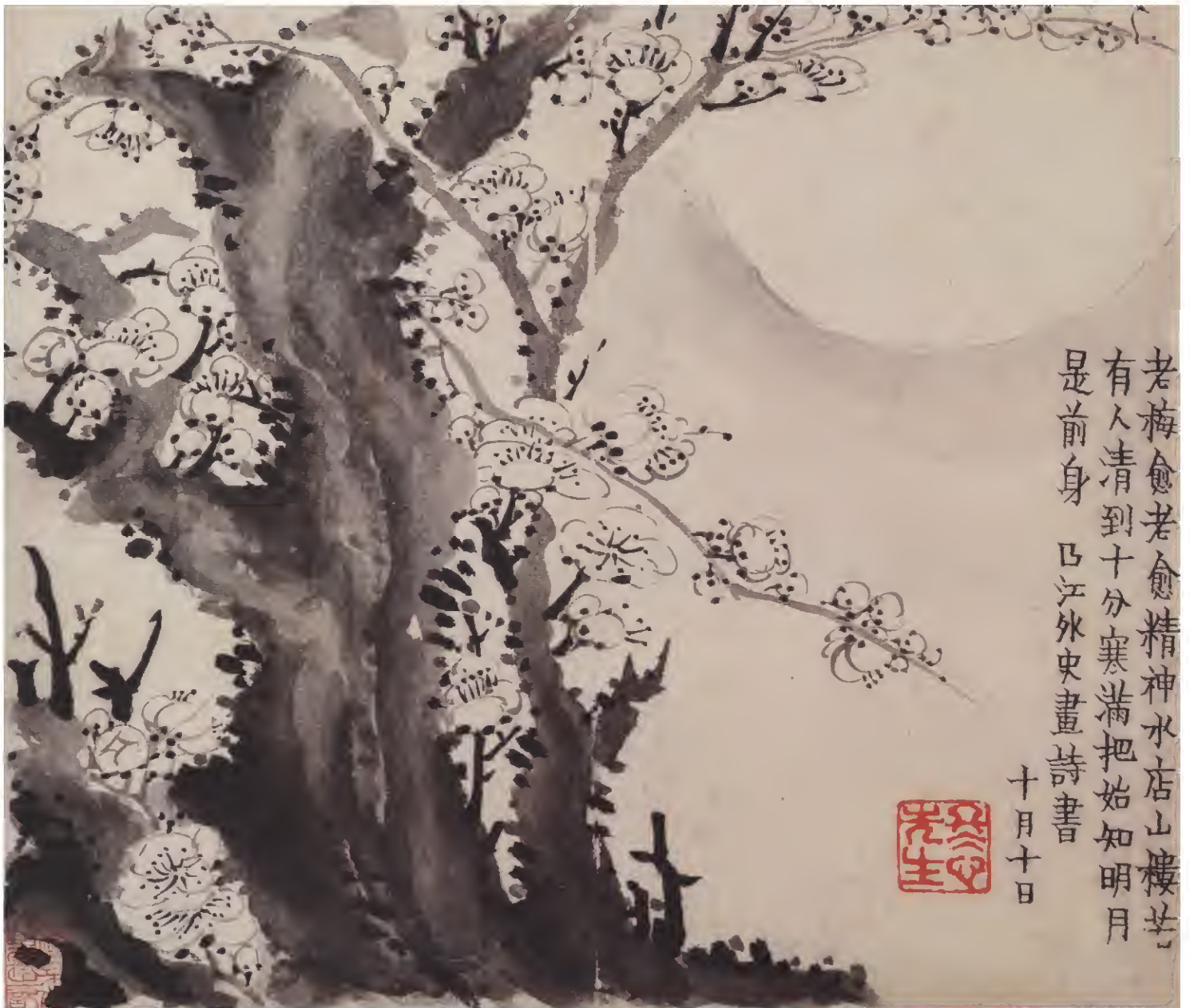
No. 44. Plum Blossoms. *Leaf F*, Old Plum

*The dog barks now and then at the falling of autumn's star.
Gusts of wind disperse the sad sounds of a distant flute.
Rapt in talk, we sit till the dawn slowly comes up,
As brightly colored clouds and cool dew overspread the
green moss.*

(WU-CHI LIU, 1975, p. 487)

Professional painters though most of them were, their art was generally occasioned by personal friendships and gatherings of the kind seen here.

In 1757, for example, the seventy-year-old Chin Nung (1687–1764) was staying as a guest at Lo P'ing's house. An old friend, a "mountain monk," sent a gift of rice, asking some paintings in return. During the next month, corresponding to October in the Western calendar, Chin toyed with his brush, creating



No. 44. Plum Blossoms, dated 1757. Chin Nung (1687–after 1764); album of twelve leaves, ink on paper; Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.11a–l. Leaf H, Plum Blossoms and Moon

an album of twelve leaves on the theme of plum blossoms (No. 44). It was the subject he painted most often, and in which he explored with surprising range the capacity of painting, poetry, and calligraphy to convey the concerns of his mind. A devout yet playful Buddhist, poor all of his life, bald, potbellied, easily drunk, a humble yet proud artist, Chin Nung is the heart and soul of Yangchow artistic eccentricity. His art is at once spiritual and abstract, formed of image and text joined to meditative reflection upon the laws of nature and existence. Principles preoccupied him, and constitute the substance of his art. We select three leaves from his album. In the first (Leaf H), he remembers as an old man the fresh white blossoms of his youth at Ku-shan, an island in Hangchow's West Lake, where the hermit Lin Pu lived and planted plum trees in the tenth century: "In my hometown, at the foot of Ku-shan, surrounded by wild heights, were several dozen plum trees, crisscrossing, in many attitudes. According to tradition, they were planted by Pu the Immortal himself [Lin Pu]. Every flowering season I sang and chanted beside them. Now I am a guest in Yangchow. I think back to them, and unconsciously draw them—I still have not lost their ancient appearance." In pale ink he draws the blossoming trees with the same ease and effortlessness as Shen Chou drawing his *Flowers of the Four Seasons*. Spread loosely over the page, they epitomize fragility, delicacy, and youth.

Chin's depiction of an *Old Plum* (Leaf F) is a formal and expressive opposite, a rugged, broken, immense old tree still producing blossoms in profusion. His signature here is written in Sanskrit: *Su-fa-lo chi su-fa-lo hua*. *Su-fa-lo* is the Sanskrit word for "gold," which in Chinese is *chin*, the painter's surname. One of his studio names was Chi-chin; thus the signature reads "Chin Chi-chin paints." Below it is the date, "tenth month, fifteenth day." The image, one of great strength and vigor, is almost an abstract representation of the twisted, shattered old trunk, done in bold, free wash that recalls Hsü Wei, another master associated with the Hangchow tradition of ink.

Finally, in *Plum Blossoms and Moon* (Leaf C), Chin Nung creates an image of symbiosis: pure white moon, pure white winter cold, pure white blossoms ("the pure whiteness of winter"); and against them, the black gnarled trunk. His poem reads:

*The older the plum tree, the more ascetic it becomes.
At the mountain tower by the river inn is a man, wretched
and poor.
Purity becomes complete when cold fills every crevice,
And only now do I know that we were once the bright moon.*

In these thoughts the seventy-year-old painter-poet transcends himself, finding his life and poverty a reflection of the old plum tree in cold moonlight. The more bitter, cold, and aged, the brighter shines out the essence. It is the reflection of an old and spiritual man.

This concern for essence and the exploration of aesthetic-moral principles in images, often very far from traditional representation, is a common characteristic of the Yangchow painters. Fragrance, coolness, heat, moonlight, age, youth, fullness, delicacy—these are the subjects of their art, and their images serve less as representations than as aesthetic equivalents of their principles.

White Peonies and Rock (No. 45) of 1752 is an expression of the sensual

No. 45. **White Peonies and Rock**, dated 1752. *Hua Yen* (1682–1765); hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper; Gift of John C. Ferguson, 1913; 13.220.119





phenomenon of flavor, embracing flowers, rock, weather, and the taste of tea. In his composition, Hua Yen (1682–1765) contrasts soft white flowers and hard black stone—a plain image. Above is a poem:

*At leisure, I study Ma Yüan in chopping lean stone,
And imitate Hsü Hsi in plucking delicate blossoms.
In the two masters' styles are sweet and bitter flavors;
They go perfectly with my tea on the first chilly day of
autumn.*

(WEN FONG; modified)

Harmonious with the hard black chipped stones of Ma Yüan, the Southern Sung academician (see No. 3), and the soft, delicate beauty of the flowers that recall Hsü Hsi, although following the style of Yün Shou-p'ing, is the bittersweet flavor of fresh tea, and the first chilly wind of autumn announcing the end of summer heat. These contrasts—sweet in bitter, cold in hot, hard in soft—again illustrate the central principle of Chinese aesthetics.

In the history of the painting of gardens and flowers in China are lodged the individual traces of a culture and a race. The garden is the precinct within which the mind attains release: meditates, celebrates the seasons and friendship, composes, creates, remembers, becomes a part of the flow of cosmic life. The flowers of the garden embody and represent sensual beauty and fragrance, companions throughout the seasons, the clock of nature's time, and the memories of men and of ideals that have become a fundamental part of aesthetic and moral thought.

So rich are the traces of men and of time in the gardens and flowers of Chinese painting and poetry that, in sum, they must be very nearly a history of human thought and experience. While I have barely touched upon that here, I have sought to explore the continuing ideals of these subjects, particularly as we have seen them in the life and thought of T'ao Ch'ien, and in the art of painters and poets who emulated his ideal through later centuries. I have also attempted to present some of the formal and expressive principles of our subjects, and at least the barest outline of historical patterns. Above all, it has been my hope to convey a sense of life and thought of the individual artists whose paintings and poetry have been emphasized, and to examine the ways they embodied themselves in their art. Their perceptions, their thoughts, and their responses to the experience of the garden have supplied the fascination of this exhibition. We celebrate with them all the beauty of the garden and the promise of the Peach Blossom Spring.

Left: No. 45. *White Peonies and Rock. Detail*

Key to Citations

Translations by Jonathan Hay and Elizabeth Bennett are first published here; those by Alfreda Murck, Marilyn Fu, Maxwell K. Hearn, and Wen Fong are gallery labels or departmental information in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Works without citations have been translated by the author.

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Catalogue of the Exhibition

Dimensions are given without mountings,
height preceding width.

1. Fan Ch'i (Nauking, Kiangsu; 1616–after 1694); late Ming to early Ch'ing
Peach Blossom Spring
Leaf G from an album of eight leaves,
dated 1646, ink and color on paper;
inscribed by the artist
6 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 8 in. (16.8 × 20.3 cm.)
The Sackler Fund, 1969; 69.242.10g

Attracted by the fragrant, blossoming peach trees lining the river bank, the fisherman from Wu-ling approaches from the right. Opening into the mountain is the magic grotto that leads to paradise. If one were to list all the Chinese painters who depicted the Peach Blossom Spring, the list would include almost every major and minor master active since the Sung dynasty. Fan Ch'i is a minor master, and this is the work of a youthful artist; he was just thirty when he painted it. The painting is the seventh and penultimate leaf in an album of scenes of retreat and hermitage. The final leaf continues the theme of blossoming peach trees, and seems to carry us beyond the mountain to the other side. On the last leaf is the artist's signature and the date, with the notation that he was staying at the Monastery of Pure Coolness, on Mount Ch'ing-liang in modern Nanking. In 1646 China was in turmoil, as Manchus and Ming loyalists fought for control of the country. Fan Ch'i apparently found refuge in a Buddhist temple to wait out the storm. The idyllic scenes of this album may reflect his life in the Ch'ing-liang Mountains, but certainly embody his dreams as well. The painting is published in Marilyn and Shen Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship: Chinese Paintings from the Arthur M. Sackler Collection in New York and Princeton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), no. 15.

2. Anonymous artist; Southern Sung
(1127–1279)
Evening in Spring Hills
Album leaf, ink and color on silk
9 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (24.8 × 26.1 cm.)
Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.

As Max Loehr has indicated (Laurence Sickman *et al.*, eds., *Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.* [New York: Spiral, 1962], no. 35), the title *Ch'un-shan hsien-yin* would be more correctly translated as *Unworldly Seclusion in the Spring Hills*. The theme is twilight meditation and the mode corresponds to the idea of sound within silence. Three centuries after

this painting was made, both the theme and the aesthetic mode were used by Shen Chou in his profound *Night Vigil* of 1492; see James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978), pls. 37, 38, pp. 90–91.

3. Ma Yüan (Ho-chung, Shansi; active ca. 1190–1225); Southern Sung
Scholar by a Waterfall
Album leaf, ink and color on silk;
signed *Servitor, Ma Yüan*
9 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (23.3 × 25.9 cm.)
Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.9

This is one of a pair of matching album leaves; the other is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. A. Dean Perry, Cleveland; for both, and an analysis of their meanings and relationship, see Richard Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven: The C. C. Wang Family Collection of Chinese Paintings, Sung and Yüan Dynasties* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), nos. 31, 32. *Scholar by a Waterfall* represents the great master Ma Yüan at his most sensitive and spellbinding. His subject is meditation, as a wandering poet—Li Po, the genius of T'ang poetry—stops to gaze into a rushing stream by the pines. The aesthetic mode is that of stillness within movement, and the viewer is drawn as if by gravity toward and into the mind of Li Po, as he leans on the balustrade by the waterfall. The Perry leaf, by contrast, is an example of movement within stillness, in which the poet sits looking over a broad valley at midday, so remote that even the temple bells cannot be heard, when he suddenly sees a few deer drinking at a stream. There are two seals of the contemporary collector Wang Chi-ch'ien along the right border.

4. Ma Yüan
Plum Blossoms by Moonlight
Album leaf, ink and color on silk; signed
9 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (25.1 × 26.7 cm.)
Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.;
L.1981.126.12

This work, too, is evidently one of a pair with a fan in the collection of Wang Chi-ch'ien, *In Search of Plum Blossoms* (see Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*, nos. 33, 34), but it is possible that both are from a larger group of related images on the theme of plum blos-

soms. As Marc F. Wilson has shown (*Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art* [Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980], no. 51), Ma Yüan was patronized and esteemed by the noted aesthete Chang Tzu (1147–after 1201). Chang particularly admired plum blossoms, and his *Twenty-four Fitting Moments for Viewing Plum Blossoms* became a standard guide for good taste in such matters. It appears that both *Plum Blossoms by Moonlight* and *In Search of Plum Blossoms* may illustrate a similar program, perhaps in the framework of contemporary poetry. There are no seals on the painting.

5. Anonymous artist; Southern Sung
(1127–1279)

Boating by a Willow Bank

Album leaf, ink and color on silk

9 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 9 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (23.3 × 24.9 cm.)

Fletcher Fund, 1947; 47.18.137

The willows, lotuses, and low-lying hills of West Lake, Hangchow, are here the subject of an idyllic moonlight excursion. The style is a refined version of the manner of Chao Ta-nien (active ca. 1070–after 1100), prince of the Sung imperial family and an amateur painter. As one of the coterie of scholar-poets who began to fashion a new language of painting for the elite, Chao developed a pictorial style that gained great popularity in the early years of the Southern Sung Academy. However, as this work demonstrates, the Academy's "official" version of his style replaced the harsher, stronger, and more interesting elements of his pictorial language with refinement and charm, and a lyrical emphasis on delicacy of texture and transparency of tonality. The vogue for this manner reached a height during the reign of Emperor Kao-tsung, 1127–1162, and gave way by the late twelfth century to the more vigorous art of Ma Yüan and Hsia Kuei.

6. Emperor Hui-tsung (K'ai-feng, Honan;
1082–1135, reigned 1101–1125);
Northern Sung

Finches and Bamboo

Handscroll, ink and color on silk; cipher
and two seals of the emperor

11 × 18 in. (27.4 × 45.7 cm.)

John M. Crawford, Jr., Collection,
Purchase, Douglas Dillon Gift, 1981;
1981.278

One of only two paintings of bird and flower subjects by Hui-tsung in American collections (the other, *Parakeet and Flowering Apricot*, is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), *Finches and Bamboo* belongs to the small category of autograph works accepted by all authorities who have published it. It is catalogued in detail by Laurence Sickman in *Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.*, no. 15. In the most recent and still controversial study of the artist, Hsü Pang-ta finds it sufficiently "amateurish" to be genuine, indicating that the author is familiar with the painting only

in reproduction (*Gugong Bowuyuan Yuankan*, 1979, no. 1, pp. 62–67). But on the contrary, *Finches and Bamboo* is a work of the most polished professional craftsmanship and leaves open the question of Hui-tsung's range of ability.

The two seals of the emperor on the painting (*Yü-shu*, under his cipher, and the double seal *Hsüan-ho* on the upper right margin) indicate a date not later than the Hsüan-ho period, 1119–1125; the latter seal, as well as its placement, suggests that the work was done during that six-year reign era. The earliest colophon is by the great artist Chao Meng-fu (1254–1322), followed by others written by Huang Chung (ca. 1531), and the collectors Hsiang Yüan-pien (1525–1590), Sung Lo (1634–1713), and Chang Ta-ch'ien (1899–1983). From their seals on the painting and from the colophons, the following partial history of ownership is established: Chao Meng-fu; the prince of Chin (enfeoffed 1378); Hsiang Yüan-pien; Sung Lo; Keng Chao-chung (1640–1686); the Moriya family of Kyoto; Chang Ta-ch'ien; and John M. Crawford, Jr. The painting and its colophons have been reproduced in *Ta-feng-t'ang ming-chi*, 4 vols. (Kyoto, 1955–56), vol. 4, pl. 9; and in Suzuki Kei, ed., *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings*, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982–), vol. 1, no. A-15-024, p. 1-97. A fairly complete record of the scroll in Chinese is found in Pien Yung-yü, *Shih-ku-t'ang shu-hua hui-k'ao*, 1682 (repr. Taipei, 1958), chüan 11, pp. 6a–b.

7. Anonymous artist; Southern Sung
(1127–1279)

Sparrows, Bamboo, and Plum Blossoms

Round fan mounted as album leaf, ink and
color on silk

10 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (25.7 × 26.7 cm.)

Bequest of Mary Clark Thompson, 1923;
24.80.487

The theme of sparrows among bamboo and in the branches of flowering trees was especially popular in the late Southern Sung period. A number of similar fan compositions exist; see, for example, Cheng Chen-to, Chang Heng, and Hsü Pang-ta, eds., *Sung-jen hua-ts'e* (Peking, 1957), pls. 40, 70, 91; and Liang Sung ming-hua ts'e (Peking, 1963), pls. 1, 15. Among all such pictures, this fan is the finest and most sensitively painted. Seldom have the soft, plump sweetness and lively demeanor of these small birds been more subtly suggested than in this delightful miniature. The painting has suffered considerable damage, especially along the left side. Parts of at least four collector's seals remain, but they have not been deciphered.

8. Anonymous artist; Southern Sung
(1127–1279)

Bird on a Loquat Tree

Album leaf, ink and color on silk

10 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (26.7 × 27.3 cm.)

John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913;
13.100.99

This is one of five pictures in the exhibition acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1913 through the pioneer Chinese art historian John C. Ferguson (see also Nos. 12, 23, 43, 45). The bird has been identified as a chestnut-flanked white-eye by Mary LeCroy, scientific assistant, American Museum of Natural History, New York. An almost identical painting is in the Palace Museum, Peking (see Cheng, Chang, and Hsü, *Sung-jen hua-ts'e*, pl. 24); it was formerly in the Ch'ing government collection. According to the editors of *Sung-jen hua-ts'e*, there is reason to assume that the Peking picture was painted by Lin Ch'un (active ca. 1174–1189), a leading bird and flower specialist of the Academy. The Metropolitan Museum's painting is slightly later in date, and shows signs of indebtedness to the stylistic innovations of Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–after 1301), in, for example, the techniques used for the description of bark. I date it tentatively to the mid- to late thirteenth century and assume that both the Peking painting and this one were products of the Academy. Something of the extent to which such compositions were used as models for duplicates or variations on a theme is suggested by still another version of the subject on a fan in the Honolulu Academy of Arts; see C. C. Wang, *Album Leaves from the Sung and Yüan Dynasties* (New York: China Institute in America, 1970), no. 25. In the Honolulu composition, while the loquats, leaves, and branches remain basically the same, the bird is a titmouse and appears in a different position.

9. Ma Lin (Hangchow, Chekiang; active 1216–1255); Southern Sung
Orchid

Album leaf, ink and color on silk;
signed *Ma Lin*

10 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (26.2 × 20.8 cm.)

Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.10

Flower paintings of the Southern Sung Academy come closer to the penetrating realism of later European art than any other genre or period of Chinese art. Among the hundreds of such paintings still extant, Ma Lin's *Orchid* holds a high position, in part because it transcends realism and achieves an ethereal existence that seems to be as much about implicit qualities and meanings as about appearances. The painting is an exploration of yin-yang dualities and inseparability: sharp, dark leaves and soft, pale blossoms; blossoming and dying and blossoming again; movement and stillness; fragrance and emptiness. There are two unidentified seals on the left, and two seals of Wang Chi-ch'ien on the right.

10. Chao Meng-chien (Hai-yen, Chekiang; 1199–1264); Southern Sung
Narcissus (*Ling-po t'u*)

Handscroll, ink on paper

13 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 146 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (33.2 × 372.1 cm.)

Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.4

Chao Meng-chien's dates, long controversial, have recently been confirmed as 1199–1264 in an unpublished manuscript by Hsü Pang-ta, *Ku shu-hua chia ch'uan-chi k'ao pien*. An-

other important recent study is in Kwan S. Wong, assisted by Stephen Addiss, *Masterpieces of Sung and Yuan Dynasty Calligraphy from the John M. Crawford, Jr., Collection* (New York: China Institute in America, 1981), no. 9. This scroll is catalogued and its extensive and complex history analyzed in detail by Marilyn Fu, in Wen Fong, with catalogue by Marilyn Fu, *Sung and Yuan Paintings* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973), pp. 7–71, 143–144, no. 12. See also Shen C. Y. Fu, *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy* (New Haven: Yale University, The Art Gallery, 1977), pp. 139, 168, no. 12. The scroll is only part of the original work; missing is a section of undetermined length that included Chao Meng-chien's own inscription and a number of colophons.

11. Ch'ien Hsüan (Wu-hsing, Chekiang; ca. 1235–after 1301); late Sung to early Yüan
Pear Blossoms (*Li-hua*)

Handscroll, ink and color on paper;
inscribed by the artist

12 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (31.1 × 95.3 cm.)

Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1977;

1977.79

Of the dozen or so major paintings by Ch'ien Hsüan still extant, according to James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 264–270, three are now in the Metropolitan Museum (see Nos. 12, 13). *Pear Blossoms* is described in one colophon as "a masterpiece of Ch'ien Hsüan's late years," but thus far no firm chronology of his oeuvre has been offered. Judging from the content of his poem (translated above), the work was painted after the destruction of the Sung dynasty by the Mongols in 1279. Twenty-four colophons are attached, eighteen from the Yüan (1279–1368) and Ming (1368–1644) periods. Four seals of Ch'ien Hsüan are placed in a vertical line to the left of his poem and signature. Among collector's seals of note are those of Yüan Jung (ca. 1375–after 1410), whose two seals are placed in the top and bottom corners at the left; Wen Cheng-ming (1470–1559) and his son Wen P'eng (1498–1573); Hsiang Yüan-pien; Liang Ch'ing-piao (1620–1691); the Ch'ien-lung emperor and his eleventh son, Yung-hsing (1752–1823), who also wrote the title frontispiece; and four nineteenth-century owners, Wu Jung-kuang (1773–1843), Ch'eng En-tse (first half 19th c.), Li Tsung-fang (1779–1846), and P'an Cheng-wei (19th c.). Apparently the scroll was owned by Ch'ien-lung, who later gave it to his son. It is not recorded in the government catalogues and bears only one of the emperor's seals. All colophon writers are listed in Sherman E. Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art under the Mongols: The Yüan Dynasty (1279–1368)* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968), no. 180. The scroll is recorded in many Chinese catalogues: Ku Fu, *P'ing-sheng chuang-kuan*, 1692; Wu Sheng, *Ta-kuan lu*, 1742; An Ch'i, *Mo-yüan hui-kuan*, 1742; Wu Jung-kuang, *Hsin-ch'ou*

hsiao-hsia chi, 1841; P'an Cheng-wei (1791–1850), *T'ing-fan-lou hsü-k'o shu-hua chi*, 1855. Until recently, the painting was owned by Sir Percival David.

12. Ch'ien Hsüan

Home Again! (*Kuei-ch'u-lai tz'e*)

Handscroll, ink and color on paper;

inscribed by the artist

10¼ × 42 in. (20.0 × 106.7 cm.)

Gift of John C. Ferguson, 1913; 13.220.124

Ch'ien Hsüan's poem, in which he writes of his admiration for and identification with the poet T'ao Ch'ien, is translated above. Attached to the painting is a transcription of T'ao's poem *Home Again!*, written by the distinguished calligrapher Hsien-yü Shu (1257–1302) in 1300, providing a theoretical terminus ante quem for the painting. The earliest documentation on the painting, after the signature and three seals of the painter, are thirteen seals of the collector Hsiang Yüan-pien. Subsequently the scroll entered the Ch'ing government collection and is recorded in detail in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*, 2nd ed., 1793, chüan 32, p. 66a (Taipei ed., 1972, p. 3196). On the scroll the Ch'ien-lung emperor wrote a poem and placed fifteen seals. It is also recorded in Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art under the Mongols*, no. 184.

Home Again! and *Wang Hsi-chi Watching Geese* (No. 13) are the primary works by which Ch'ien Hsüan's literary landscape paintings are judged. Presumably he intended to lend them an air of remoteness and golden sublimity comparable to that of the men and the art he chose to glorify. Certainly, there had been nothing like his use of color since the great age of Buddhist wall painting in the seventh and eighth centuries. Color became in his hands a form of expressive abstraction, used in pure fields or with a screen of shimmering texture laid over it. Literalness is no part of this world of dreams and memory: in front of the rustic home of Mr. Five Willows, Ch'ien placed six willow trees.

13. Ch'ien Hsüan

Wang Hsi-chih Watching Geese

(*Kuan-e t'u*)

Handscroll, ink, color, and gold on paper;

inscribed by the artist

9⅞ × 36½ in. (23.2 × 92.7 cm.)

Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973; 1973.120.6

There are two nearly identical versions of this composition: this one, and one in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, recorded in *Ku-kung shu-hua lu* (Taipei, 1966), chüan 4, p. 73; reproduced in *Chinese Cultural Treasures: National Palace Museum Illustrated Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Taipei, 1966), no. 103. The Taipei scroll has no poem or signature by Ch'ien Hsüan, but does bear a seal of Chao Meng-fu, Ch'ien's distinguished friend. It was later owned by the great collector Hsiang Yüan-pien. Documentation of the Museum's scroll begins with the painter's signature, poetic inscription, and seals, but its later history is not known until the seventeenth century, when Keng Chao-chung was the owner.

It later entered the collection of Ch'ien-lung, whose seals it bears, and is thoroughly catalogued in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*, 1745, chüan 43, pp. 2–5; in Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art under the Mongols*, no. 185; and in Fong, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, pp. 144–145.

14. Anonymous artist; Yüan (1279–1368)

Magpie in a Flowering Pear Tree

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

spurious signature: *Huang Ch'üan* (lower right branch)

36 × 12⅞ in. (91.5 × 30.7 cm.)

Lent by John B. Elliott

This is apparently the painting catalogued in the first edition of the Ch'ing government collection, *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*, 1745, chüan 17, p. 3, as the work of Huang Ch'üan (903–968), and discussed in detail by Ch'en Jen-t'ao, *Chin-k'uei ts'ang hua p'ing-shih* (Hong Kong, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 1–2. In his *Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, James Cahill describes it as "Yüan period? Style of Ch'ien Hsüan" (p. 36). The earliest collector's seals on the painting are those of Hsiang Yüan-pien: *Shen-p'in*, *T'ien-lai-ko*, *Tzu-ching*, *Hsiang Yüan-pien yin*, and *Mo-lin shan-jen*. A poem by the Ch'ien-lung emperor is dated 1758, and there are eight of his seals on the scroll, plus one seal and his title inscription on the outer label. There are also individual seals of the Chia-ch'ing emperor (1796–1820) and the Hsüan-t'ung emperor (1908–1911). The most recent seals are those of Ch'en Jen-t'ao. This elegant and refined painting may be compared with the paintings of Wang Yüan (ca. 1280–1349 or later), but belongs to a category we might define as "to the honor of Ch'ien Hsüan."

15. Anonymous artist (Hangchow or

Ningpo, Chekiang; 13th–14th century);

late Sung or Yüan

Crane in a Bamboo Grove

Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk;

spurious seals of Chao Po-chü

About 89 × 55 in. (about 226.1 × 139.7 cm.)

Lent by The Crane Company; L.1980.99

It is not hard to account for the popularity of this subject, and of cranes and pine. Hundreds of such pictures exist, ranging in date from the Southern Sung period to the present. On the one hand, cranes are auspicious, symbolizing longevity and faithfulness, and hence may serve many expressive purposes; for example, as a gift to the newly married or as a birthday present. Cranes are also a popular element in Ch'an Buddhist iconography, and the most celebrated painting of cranes is by the Ch'an master Mu-ch'i; see Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Painting, Leading Masters and Principles*, 7 vols. (New York: Ronald, 1956–58), vol. 3, pl. 337. On the other hand, cranes were traditionally perhaps the most prized animal or bird companion of scholars, equivalent to the dog of the Englishman, and cherished as dear friends or even relatives; the tenth-century hermit-poet Lin Pu referred to cranes as his children. They are in any case magnificent birds that in China held the same

mystique as dolphins have held in the West—as friends and companions of man although they are creatures of the high sky and the deep sea. As companions, therefore, they most often function in art, paired with either bamboo or pine, to symbolize the union of man with the plant and animal kingdoms. The Ch'an Buddhist iconography is simply based upon this concept, and extends it to the realm of divine spirit.

This painting appears to be roughly contemporary with Mu-ch'i, who died sometime between 1269 and 1274. The detailed realism of the bamboo recalls Southern Sung and Li K'an (see No. 16). The techniques used to portray the crane are nearest to those of the Southern Sung Academy and to the professional painters of Ningpo in the late twelfth and thirteenth century. Only the blue-green convention of the foreground rocks is anachronistic, apparently used to suggest that the painter was the distinguished imperial master Chao Po-chü. Instead, they indicate a late Sung or early Yüan master influenced by the style favored by Ch'ien Hsüan. The only two legible seals are in the upper left, and read: *Shen-ling tsao* [hua?] *T'ai-tsu i*, a proud reference to Chao's descent from the founder of the Sung dynasty, Emperor T'ai-tsu; and *Ch'ien-li*, the painter's *hao*, or studio name. Impressive in size and quality, these seals suggest that the painting was not distant from Chao Po-chü's lifetime (first half 12th c.), painted at a time when his seals were well known; none are known to exist today. At least they support the evidence of the picture itself as a late Sung or early Yüan work.

16. Li K'an (Chi-ch'iu, Hopei; 1245–1320); Yüan
Bamboo and Rock (*Shuang-kou chu-shih*),
dated 1318
Pair of hanging scrolls, ink and color
on silk; inscribed by the artist
74¾ × 21¾ in. (189.9 × 55.2 cm.)
Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973;
1973.120.7a, b

The almost scientific exactitude of Li K'an's paintings of bamboo has no rival outside of the Sung Academy. He is the only distinguished scholar-official-painter who openly admired and emulated Emperor Hui-tsung's requirement that painting must be both realistic and metaphorical, as a comparison of *Bamboo and Rock* with Hui-tsung's *Finches and Bamboo* (No. 6) will indicate. The recent publication of Li's *Twisted Bamboo* of 1307, in the Kuangchou Provincial Museum (*I-yuan to-ying*, 1982, no. 16, p. 1), offers still another masterpiece of his late years, an eloquent expression of Li's understanding of the meanings and relevance of bamboo to human life.

The artist's signature, "The Taoist Hsi-chai painted this in the winter of the *wu-wu* year in the Yen-yu era [1318]," is followed by two of his seals: *Li K'an Chung-pin* and *Hsi-chai*. Evidently the earliest collection seal is the half-seal of the early Ming government collection, dating to the period between December 1373 and December 1374. *Bamboo*

and *Rock* is catalogued in Fong, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, p. 151.

17. Shen Hsüan (Wu-hsing, Chekiang; active ca. 1370–1400); Ming
Bamboo Grove
Handscroll, ink and pale color on paper
9¾ × 25⅝ in. (24.8 × 64.5 cm.)
Edward Elliott Family Collection,
Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981;
1981.285.16

Bamboo Grove is the sole surviving work by a little-known fourteenth-century master, identified by his seals on the painting as Shen Hsüan, also called Shen Shih-ch'eng. In a colophon attached to the painting, Wen Chia (1501–1583), a painter, scholar, and connoisseur, writes that Shen was a native of Chia-ho (Chia-hsing in modern Chekiang province). Other sources, however (*Ming-hua lu* and *Hua-shih hui-yao*), describe him as a native of Wu-hsing, the hometown of the most influential painter of the Yüan period, Chao Meng-fu. This painting owes nearly everything of technique and vision to Chao, as noted by Wen Chia, even though Shen followed a different master, Hu T'ing-hui of Wu-hsing. Hu was a professional painter, mounter, and restorer, and, presumably, a master of the traditional academic craft of painting, whose subjects included the imperial dragon-boat races and such narratives as Emperor Ming-huang's flight to Szechwan. Wen Chia finds the present work surprisingly similar to that of Chao Meng-fu, and suggests that Shen must have actually copied one of Chao's paintings. The resemblance to Chao's work is quite remarkable.

Shen's two name seals, one reading *Shen Shih-ch'eng yin* in the upper left corner and the other *Hsüan-chai shu-hua* in the lower right, are placed symmetrically. They balance one another, each some distance from the edge, and each is a traditional seal-script legend. The seal in the upper right corner, however, reading *Shui-ching kung*, is placed flush against the upper border, and the script style is the archaic pre-seal manner of writing. "Shui-ching kung" was a name used by Chao Meng-fu; his signature on a short handscroll in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., reads "the Taoist of the Crystal Palace," *Shui-ching kung tao-jen*. However, as yet I have found no other use of this seal, and its identity remains mysterious. In any case, the seal suggests that *Bamboo Grove* was painted in the style of Chao Meng-fu, by a native of Chao's hometown Wu-hsing. Stylistically the closest parallels to *Bamboo Grove* are the paintings of Wang Fu; see especially such works as *The Pleasures of Fishing* in the Metropolitan Museum, published in Suzuki, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, no. A17-060, pp. 132, 133.

A replica of this work is in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (Suzuki, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, no. A35-105, p. 1-379). A Chinese catalogue record of the work, mounted together with a landscape painting by Chao Yüan (ac-

tive ca. 1350–1375), is in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*, 1745, chüan 14, pp. 127–128 (Taipei ed., 1972, pp. 2864–2865).

18. Wu Po-li (Kuei-ch'i?, Kiangsi; active late 14th–early 15th c.); Ming
Pine and Rock
Hanging scroll, ink on paper;
inscribed by Chang Yü-ch'ü
47¼ × 13⅜ in. (120.0 × 33.5 cm.)
Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.2

This spirited, exuberant dragon pine, like *Bamboo Grove* a companion of rocks and flowing water, is again a precious sole surviving work by another almost unknown master, the Taoist painter Wu Po-li. His seal, reading *Lung-hu shan-ch'iao Wu Ch'ao-yün t'u-shu yin*, is placed just below the base of the stone along the lower left border. At the very top of the painting is a poetic inscription by the forty-third celestial master of the Taoist church, Chang Yü-ch'ü (1361–1410), together with two of his seals. Wu Po-li was his friend and protégé. Wu was also a follower of the greatest Taoist painter of the time, Fang Ts'ung-i (Fang-hu, ca. 1301–after 1378), whose mystical landscape *Cloud Mountains* is in the Metropolitan Museum (see Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*, no. 81). There are only a handful of paintings by these distinctive masters extant today, but they suffice to define the thoroughly idiosyncratic manner of Taoist painting in the late fourteenth century. With rich ink wash; flowing, curvilinear compositions; a powerful sense of movement, space, and atmosphere; and an exuberant spirit of irrepressibility, their art is a fascinating counterpole to the equally distinctive creations of the Ch'an Buddhists a century earlier. For recent publications of this work, see Ch'en Jen-t'ao, *Chin-k'uei ts'ang hua p'ing-shih*, 2 vols. (Hong Kong, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 71–73; Richard Barnhart, *Wintery Forests, Old Trees: Some Landscape Themes in Chinese Painting* (New York: China Institute in America, 1972), no. 12; and Wen Fong and Maxwell K. Hearn, "Silent Poetry: Chinese Paintings in the Douglas Dillon Galleries," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Winter 1981/82), pp. 44–45.

A number of spurious seals were added to the painting, probably in recent times, in an effort to change an obscure work into a masterpiece by one of the great fathers of landscape painting. The early Ming government half-seal is spurious, as is the double seal *Shao-hsing*. The seals of Ch'en Jen-t'ao and Chang Ta-ch'ien are genuine, as are those of Chang Yü-ch'ü and Wu Po-li.

19. Hsüeh-ch'uang (Sung-chiang, Kiangsu; active ca. 1340–1350); Yuan
Orchid, Bamboo, and Rock
Hanging scroll, ink and pale color on silk; signed by the artist
13⅜ × 33⅜ in. (34.0 × 86.0 cm.)
Lent by John B. Elliott

Typical of the dozen or more paintings by Hsüeh-ch'uang extant (see Cahill, *Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, p. 319),

this work is an image of graceful curves and few elements: orchid, rock, brambles, and bamboo. The painter's signature is followed by two seals, the first reading *Hsüeh-ch'uang*, the second *Wu-wai ch'ing-lo*, "a pure happiness that exists beyond objects." It was published in *Kokka*, no. 594 (May 1940), while in the Harada Sekizenkai collection, Tokyo. Hsüeh-ch'uang, originally named Ts'ao, was also known as P'u-ming. He served as abbot of several Buddhist temples in southern China, including the Ch'eng-t'ien Temple in Soochow, and painted primarily orchids, but also bamboo and assorted wild plants, in much the same spirit as the Ch'an painters of the late Sung period. Like Shen Hsüan (No. 17), he was influenced by Chao Meng-fu, but did not win appreciation from scholar-connoisseurs. Modern scholarship on Hsüeh-ch'uang begins with the seminal study by Shimada Shujiro in Japanese, *Houn* 15 (1935), pp. 49–64; see also Chu-tsing Li, "The Oberlin Orchid and the Problem of P'u-ming," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 16 (1962), pp. 49–76; and Ch'en Kao-hua, *Yuan-tai hua-chia shih-liao* (Shanghai, 1980), pp. 495–500.

20. Hsü Ching (Ch'ing-chiang, Kiangsi; active first half 15th c.); Ming
Plum Blossoms in Snow, dated 1441
Hanging scroll, ink on silk; inscribed by the artist
58⅝ × 29¾ in. (149 × 75.6 cm.)
Edward Elliott Family Collection,
Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982;
1982.1.5

In his inscription, written in two columns in the lower right, the painter dedicates the work to a certain Wang Kuang-wen, gives it the title *Sui-han ch'ing-pai*, "The Pure Whiteness of Winter," and dates it "sixteenth day of the fifth month in the *hsing-yu* year of the Cheng-t'ung era [1441]." Three of his seals follow the signature. This is his sole known extant work, and it suggests that he was a follower of the great twelfth-century master of plum blossoms, Yang Pu-chih (1098–1169). The work was formerly in the collection of Wang Chi-ch'ien, and is published in *Exhibition of Paintings of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods* (Hong Kong: City Museum and Art Gallery, 1970), no. 2.

21. Shen Chou (Soochow, Kiangsu; 1427–1509); Ming
Flowers of the Four Seasons
Handscroll, ink and color on paper;
signed by the artist
10⅜ × 198¾ in. (25.9 × 504.8 cm.)
Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, in memory of Phyllis E. Dillon, 1982;
1982.205

In this seemingly effortless, sketchlike survey of some favorite flowers of the four seasons, Shen Chou matches magnolia and peony for spring, gardenia and hollyhock for summer, chrysanthemum and hibiscus for autumn, and narcissus ("paper whites") and plum blossoms for winter. His affection for the

flowers is manifest in the naturalness of their composition, almost like informal hand-writing: they seem to be messages written to himself, reminders of things not to be forgotten. Shen Chou painted flowers all his life, along with nearly every other subject, from crabs to old trees. Within the long range of his activity, the pictures of plants, flowers, and animals painted in his old age, before and after he reached seventy, are especially attractive. He was content by then to make simple and affecting images, almost as if he had at last achieved the state of mind in which clarity of perception is as easy as opening the eyes, seeing both inward self and outward things at once. Technique seems to be forgotten, and virtuosity is repressed. Sometimes in these images, the brush moves as slowly as an old man walking. For all of their simplicity and restraint, however, each flower is presented with clarity and precision, brightly lit in the mind's eye.

Shen Chou's signature, *Ch'ang-chou Shen Chou*, and his seal, *Shih-t'ien*, are in the upper right corner of the scroll. The earliest collector's seal is that in the lower right corner, reading *Hsi-shan Tsou-shih*. The owner has not been identified, but the seal was impressed before that of Chu Chih-ch'ih above it, and Chu was active in the early seventeenth century. The collector Tsou may therefore have been the original recipient of the scroll. It is likely that in its original form one or more poems or inscriptions were written by Shen Chou to the left of the painting. The placement of his signature at the beginning of the scroll seems to require that his own writing balance it at the end of the scroll, which seems cramped, as if cut. Finally, the earliest seal at the end is Chu Chih-ch'ih's, in the bottom corner. Symmetry suggests that the unidentified Tsou of Wu-hsi would have placed his seal there, just as he had at the beginning corner. Perhaps, therefore, the seal was present originally, but sometime between his ownership and that of Chu Chih-ch'ih at the beginning of the seventeenth century the writings following the painting were removed. No confirmation of this possibility has yet been found.

Among notable owners was Hsiang Yüan-pien, who, in a remarkable instance of restraint—perhaps occasioned by the restraint of the painting—impressed only five seals on the scroll. The distinguished collector Kao Shih-ch'i (1645–1704) added two colophons, one dated 1694, the other 1704, and scattered twenty seals over the work. Subsequently, it entered the Ch'ing government collection, as evidenced by the single seal of the Chia-ch'ing emperor. The only earlier publication of the picture known to me is in Christie's sale catalogue *Important Chinese and Japanese Works of Art*, no. 5156 (New York, June 23, 24, 28, 1982), lot no. 605.

22. Wen Cheng-ming (Soochow, Kiangsu; 1470–1559); Ming
The Cho-cheng Yüan (Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician), dated 1551
Album of eight leaves, ink on paper;
facing pages inscribed by the artist

Average leaf: $10\frac{7}{16} \times 10\frac{3}{4}$ in.
(26.5×27.3 cm.)

Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1979; 1979.458.1a–h

As extant works evidence, Wen first painted the garden in which he had a study in 1533, when he completed an album of thirty-one leaves, each with a matching poem. This album consists of eight new paintings of sites from the earlier album, with eight of the same poems on facing pages. It has been thoroughly catalogued by Roderick Whitfield, *In Pursuit of Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), no. 3, pp. 66–75; and by Richard Edwards, *The Art of Wen Cheng-ming* (Ann Arbor: Museum of Art, University of Michigan, 1976), no. 51.

23. Wen Cheng-ming
Old Wisteria among Trees and Rocks
(ca. 1530)

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

inscribed by the artist

$25 \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ in. (63.5×29.2 cm.)

Gift of John C. Ferguson, 1913;

13.220.110

Wen's poetic inscription is translated above. Two of his seals are below his signature: *Wen Cheng-ming yin* and *Cheng-chung*; two others are in the lower right corner: *T'ing-yün kuan* (above) and *Heng-shan*. The owner of the seal in the lower left corner, *Ch'ien-chai chien-shang*, has not been identified. Although not dated, the painting was almost certainly done in 1531. The tight, dry, archaizing style is a feature of the dated works of that year, as seen in the Los Angeles County Museum's *Old Trees by a Cold Waterfall*, the *Farewell at T'ing-yün* in the Vannotti collection, Lugano, and *Leaning on a Rock*, a fan painting in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, all dated 1531. With this picture and a few others, they constitute a distinctive group done in a manner not seen earlier or repeated later. For reproductions of the works cited, see Edwards, *The Art of Wen Cheng-ming*, pp. 112–113, 116–117.

24. T'ang Yin (Soochow, Kiangsu; 1470–1524); Ming

Song of One Year; Bamboo in Rain,
dated 1522

Folding fan, ink on gold-flecked paper;

inscribed by the artist

$6\frac{9}{16} \times 19\frac{3}{8}$ in. (17.3×49.9 cm.)

Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.4a, b

Originally mounted on opposite sides of a folding fan, as T'ang Yin intended, according to his inscription following *Song of One Year*, the calligraphy and painting of the fan are now separately preserved. Both poems are translated above. *Song of One Year* must have been an especially successful poem, because T'ang used it as the subject of a long hand-scroll now in the Art Institute of Chicago (Suzuki, *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, no. A3-016, pp. 1-34-35). T'ang also painted bamboo fans of this kind often in his late years (*Ninety Years of the Wu School* [Taipei: National Palace Mu-

seum, 1976], nos. 86, 103, 104). On the painting are two seals of T'ang Yin: *Wu-ch'ü* (round relief) and *T'ang Yin ssu-yin* (square intaglio). To the left is a seal reading *Shao-shih shen-ting* that may have belonged to the nineteenth-century collector Shen Kuo-ch'i. On the calligraphy, to the left of the final line, are three seals of T'ang Yin: *Nan-ching chieh-yüan* (rectangular relief), *Ch'an-hsien* (rectangular intaglio), and *T'ang Tzu-wei* (square relief). The small seal below, []-shih, might also be T'ang's, but is not identified. In the lower right corner is a seal (square relief) reading *Shen Wu shen-ting* that may also belong to a member of Shen Kuo-ch'i's family.

25. Ch'en Shun (Soochow, Kiangsu; 1483-1544); Ming
Summer Garden (ca. 1530)
 Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;
 inscribed by the artist
 126 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (320.4 × 99.7 cm.)
 Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.17

Over ten feet high, this exuberant image of magnolia, lotus, and pomegranate is one of Ch'en Shun's most ambitious paintings. Its size suggests that it was painted for a specific patron or, more likely, for a specific place. The name White Jade Hall in the last line of the poem (translated above) is used to refer to an official government residence or office, and, in general, only such palatial buildings could have housed such a work. Ch'en may therefore have been asked to make such a painting for a governmental palace of some kind. He used the same poem at least once again, on a similar painting without lotuses, now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (MV190). The implications of the final line would then be "Where, among ordinary men, could one find such a place as this!" Four of the painter's seals accompany his inscription. The larger of the two seals at lower left belonged to T'ang Han-t'i of Chia-hsing (born 1816); that below, to the unidentified Chin Seng-chi. The painting was first published by J. P. DuBosc and Laurence Sickman, in the Wildenstein catalogue *Great Chinese Painters of the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties: XV to XVIII Centuries* (New York, 1949), no. 23; and more recently in Fong and Hearn, "Silent Poetry," pp. 52-53.

26. Ch'en Shun
Garden Flowers, dated 1540
 Album of sixteen leaves, ink and color on paper; one additional leaf inscribed by the artist
 Six leaves: 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 22 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (32.5 × 57.3 cm.)
 Ten leaves: 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (33.3 × 57.8 cm.)
 Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.16

The frontispiece for this colorful album was written by Wen P'eng (1498-1573) in four strong *li-shu* characters: *Po-yang tsa-hua*, "A Variety of Flowers by Po-yang," or Ch'en Shun. The album proper consists of sixteen paintings, fifteen on a heavily sized gold-flecked paper, one on the same paper without gold. Immediately following the paintings is

a notation on two facing pages by the painter: "In the *keng-tzu* year of the Chia-ching era [1540], I traveled to Yü-shan, and passed by Mr. Chou's *Liu-kuan ts'ao-t'ang*. The owner brought out this album, prepared the powdered colors, and inscribed it as pictures of miscellaneous plants. My stay extended until it became several months, and before I knew it, I had filled the album. Those who look at it might best regard it as an album of studies." His signature, *Tao-fu chih*, is followed by three seals: *Pai-yang shan-jen*, *Ch'en Tao-fu shih*, and *Fu-sheng yin* (this last not recorded in the usual sources). Brief colophons by Wen P'eng and Wang Chih-teng (1535-1612) follow, and a longer, rather puzzling one by the eccentric Yangchow painter Chin Nung (1687-after 1764). At one point, Chin mentions an album of nine leaves, seven of which are flowers, and two landscapes. His essay begins, in his manner, with a history of painting starting with the mythical emperor Fu Hsi and the Hexagrams, then mentioning only the following curious selection of masters: Li Ssu-hsün and Wang Wei; Li T'ang and Ma Yüan; Tai Chin, Wu Wei, and Hsieh Shih-ch'en; and finally Ch'en Shun. Clearly Chin Nung considered Hangchow and its traditions the mainstream of art!

Despite the problems of Chin Nung's colophon, there is no doubt that the present sixteen leaves were painted as a group by Ch'en Shun in 1540. Ten of the leaves are of slightly different measurement than the other six; it is likely that the groups of six and ten were separately owned for a time. The paper is identical, and, most tellingly, the painter's seals reveal a pattern that only the original unity of the album can explain. After his signature, as noted, he placed three seal impressions. At least one of these seals appears on each of fifteen painting leaves (one leaf has none of Ch'en's seals). Only those three are used, no others, and they are used systematically, then placed as a unified group after the signature. Chin Nung notes that paintings of different sizes and subjects were mixed up when he saw the album. I propose that subsequent to his colophon of 1759, three of the nine leaves he saw were removed and ten others added to the remaining six, thus forming the sixteen-leaf album. Whoever did this was undoubtedly restoring the original group. Unfortunately, neither Ch'en Shun nor the colophon writers mention the number of leaves painted by Ch'en in 1540, so there may have been more than sixteen. As Ch'en notes, it took him several months to finish the album. The Mr. Chou of Yü-shan for whom the album was painted is not identified, but at the beginning of the frontispiece and after the colophon of Wang Chih-teng, which form the original unit with the paintings, are seals of one Chiou Hsiao-k'un, who was perhaps the recipient.

Edwin T. Morris has identified the species of flowers in each leaf: A, B) title pages; C) spring orchid, herbaceous peony, and cassia; D) hydrangea and flowering crab apple; E) gardenia and azalea; F) rose and Chinese aster; G) crab apple, spring orchid, and possibly pomegranate or rhododendron; H) day

lily and Chinese aster; I) morning glory; J) narcissus and rose; K) oleander and crab apple; L) plum blossom (Japanese apricot) and camellia; M) magnolia, crab apple, and orchid leaves; N) tree peony and Japanese quince; O) spring orchid, peach, and hydrangea; P) deutzia, orchid leaves, and hemp leaves; Q) orange day lily, garden balsam, and Chinese aster; R) lily, Chinese aster, and stellaria.

27. Lu Chih (Sochow, Kiangsu; 1496–1576); Ming
Planting Chrysanthemums (ca. 1550)
Hanging scroll, ink and pale color on paper; inscribed by the artist and by the Ch'ien-lung emperor, 1777
42 × 10¾ in. (106.7 × 27.3 cm.)
Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.5

Lu's inscription is translated above. In the upper left is a poem and inscription by the Ch'ien-lung emperor, dated 1777, and seven of his seals in the upper portion; two of Lu Chih's seals are below his signature, and one of An Ch'i's in the upper left corner. The painting does not seem to be recorded in the three editions of the government catalogue *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*. It is listed in An Ch'i's *Mo-yüan hui-kuan lu*, 1742, chüan 4, *hsü lu*, p. 246 (Taipei, 1963, *I-shu ts'ung-pien* repr.). Wu P'u-hsin (active ca. 1900) was a later owner.

28. Hsiang Sheng-mo (Chia-hsing, Chekiang; 1597–1658); late Ming to early Ch'ing
Frog on a Lotus Leaf
Leaf G from an album of eight leaves, dated 1639, ink and color on paper
11 1/8 × 8 3/4 in. (28.3 × 22.2 cm.)
Edward Elliott Family Collection, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981; 1981.285.3g

This is the seventh leaf of an eight-leaf album of alternating flower and bird subjects and landscape paintings. In its present form, the program of the album is: A) plum blossoms with poem; B) landscape with the theme of "a thousand peaks contend in splendor, ten thousand cascades contend their flow"; C) a swallow on a tree with wisteria; D) landscape with fisherman on a river, a waterwheel below, the date 1639, and a poem; E) chrysanthemums and bamboo with poem; F) river landscape with fishing nets and a two-line inscription; G) frog on a lotus leaf; F) landscape with man riding donkey, and a poem. The signature on Leaf G, *Po-tzu I*, is followed by the seal *Hsiang Sheng-mo yin*. There are no collector's seals on the album.

29. Hsiang Sheng-mo
White Chrysanthemum, dated 1654
Hanging scroll, light color on paper; inscribed by the artist
30 1/4 × 15 1/2 in. (76.8 × 39.4 cm.)
Edward Elliott Family Collection, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981; 1981.285.4

The impressive documentation of this elegant

picture is also somewhat frustrating. Hsiang's inscription is translated above. Two of his seals are below the signature in the upper right corner, and a third is placed in the lower left corner. A poem by the Ch'ien-lung emperor is dated 1747 and accompanied by two seals, with five others elsewhere. However, the painting does not seem to be catalogued in any of the three editions of the government catalogue *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*. In the lower right corner is a seal of An Ch'i (1683?–1744?), but neither does his catalogue, *Mo-yüan hui-kuan lu*, record the painting. There are five seals of the Anhui collector Chang Jo-ai (1713–1746). A seal of the noted Shanghai collector P'ang Yüan-chi (ca. 1865–1949) is placed just above one of Chang's at lower left, and only P'ang records the painting in his catalogue, *Hsü-chai ming-hua hsü-lu* (Shanghai, 1924), chüan 2, 1a. There is also a seal of the contemporary Hong Kong collector and dealer Hsü Po-chao.

30. Yün Shou-p'ing (Wu-chin, Kiangsu; 1633–1690); late Ming to early Ch'ing
Cassia Tree
Album leaf, ink and color on paper; inscribed by the artist
8 1/8 × 12 in. (20.6 × 30.5 cm.)
Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.

The utterly distinctive style of Yün Shou-p'ing was a synthesis of techniques going back to the Sung period (especially to the Academy), and forward to such contemporaries as Hsiang Sheng-mo (No. 29). While he deeply honored the past and counted among the most sensitive critics of the great masters, his own art is nonetheless very modern and represents a new standard for flower and bird subjects. Like Shih-t'ao in his late years, Yün seems to have been beset with commissions upon which his livelihood depended, and to have been both overworked and in poor health. Most of his paintings appear to have been done as sale pieces, either albums or fans on flower themes (Nos. 30, 31), or formal compositions on silk (Nos. 32, 34), conveying romantic and colorful images of graceful beauty. His good friend, the landscape painter Wang Hui, often added inscriptions or colophons that undoubtedly increased the value of Yün's work. He later contributed the money for Yün's funeral, since the family was destitute. Occasionally, as in *Lotuses on a Summer Evening* (No. 34), the master painted for his own reasons, inspired by personal experience; these rare works are a counterpart of his more frequent elegant formal compositions. Across this range, nonetheless, Yün explored ideas of beauty, color, grace, and sensual romanticism that nowhere else in seventeenth-century art find such effective form. To the painting of flowers he brought emotion, history, inspiration, sensuality, and a lofty mind that was at peace with itself and the troubled time he lived in. No one before or since had so sensitively explored the forms and meanings of flowers in art.

Cassia Tree, one of two extant leaves from an album of unknown size, with the accom-

panying leaf of purple and yellow chrysanthemums, was formerly in the collection of Alice Boney, New York. The artist's inscription is translated above. All three seals are the artist's: *Pai-yün wai-shih* in the right corner, and *Shou-p'ing* and *Cheng-shu* to the left.

31. Yün Shou-p'ing

Carnations and Amaranthus

Folding fan mounted as album leaf,
ink and color on paper; inscribed by the artist
6 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 20 in. (17 × 50.8 cm.)
Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.;
L.1981.126.43

The artist's inscription reads "Playfully painted at Ou-hsiang-kuan, Pai-yün wai-shih, Shou-p'ing," and there are two of his seals: *Shou-p'ing yin* and *Cheng-shu*. Among collector's seals are four of K'ung Kuang-t'ao (mid-19th c.) and two of John M. Crawford, Jr. One seal is unidentified. The work is reproduced and discussed in Wan-go H. C. Weng, *Chinese Painting and Calligraphy: A Pictorial Survey*; 69 *Fine Examples from the John M. Crawford, Jr., Collection* (New York: Dover, 1978), no. 60, pp. xxxvi, 130-131.

32. Yün Shou-p'ing

Tree Peonies, dated 1688

Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk;
inscribed by the artist
69 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (176.5 × 89.2 cm.)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse, 1972;
1972.16

This very formal picture represents the painter at his most polished and professional. His poem, an elegant play upon beauty and romance, is translated above. Three seals accompany his inscription: *Chi Yüeh-yün* (tall rectangular relief to the right), *Shou-p'ing chih yin*, and *Cheng-shu*.

33. Attributed to Yün Shou-p'ing

One Hundred Flowers

Handscroll, ink and color on silk
16 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 255 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (41.9 × 1649 cm.)
Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.;
L.1981.126.42

The signature of Yün Shou-p'ing at the beginning of the scroll was added by another hand, as was the inscription at the end purporting to be that of Wang Hui. The attribution of the painting to Yün, therefore, depends upon the style of the painting alone, and I believe it unlikely that the hand is his. Such themes, of course, do not call for such organic relationships as seen in *Tree Peonies* (No. 32), for example, since the intention is simply to present a great variety of flowers in panoramic form. Seasonal combinations are not necessary in such arrangements, nor is the random, additive compositional quality unusual. Even so, one would expect of Yün Shou-p'ing a somewhat more rhythmic, flowing organization, a greater play upon such formal interrelationships as density and sparseness, rising and falling, or opening and closing, as well as a sharper sense of the organic, tactile qualities of the flowers them-

selves. As it is, the painting is a lush, rich pageant of garden flowers, and might almost serve as a catalogue of the techniques, varieties, and conventions of the Yün Shou-p'ing manner. Many details of the scroll are reproduced with commentary in the engagement calendar *Spring Flowers, Autumn Moons: The Flowers and Gardens of Ancient China* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983).

34. Yün Shou-p'ing

Lotuses on a Summer Evening, dated 1684

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;
inscribed by the artist
82 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (208.9 × 98.4 cm.)
Gift of Marie-Hélène and Guy Weill, in
honor of Professor Wen Fong, 1982;
1982.470

Yün's inscription is translated above. The three seals on the painting are his: *Nan-t'ien hsiao-yin*, *Yün Cheng-shu*, and *Shou-p'ing*.

35. Shih-t'ao (Tao-chi) (Kuei-lin,

Kwangsi; 1642-1707); Ch'ing

Drunk in Autumn Woods

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;
three inscriptions by the artist
73 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (185.7 × 70.2 cm.)
Promised Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr.;
L.1981.126.53

The eight paintings by Shih-t'ao in this exhibition were probably all done during the final decade of his life, between about 1696 and 1707. This was the period of his "great cleansing," of the washing away of his earlier identities as Buddhist monk and refugee *i-min* heir of the Ming imperial family, and the beginning of a settled, secular life, primarily in Yangchow, as a professional painting master. Now secure in his identity as a surviving prince of an honored dynasty, confident of his powers as an artist, and deeply concerned with the intellectual foundations of the art of painting, he at last devoted his energies to the creative pursuits of art. *The Grotto of Chang Tao-ling* (No. 39) was based upon a composition by Shen Chou, one of several predecessors honored by Shih-t'ao through the emulation of their styles. As with his *Tombs of the Fei Family* of 1702, now in the Musée Guimet, Paris (see Richard Edwards, in *The Painting of Tao-chi* [Ann Arbor: Museum of Art, University of Michigan, 1967], no. 30), it is likely that the painter was commissioned by a patron to create the image of a famed site, and was given or already knew the composition of Shen Chou upon which to base it. His model was transformed into an individually distinctive composition of surging line and glowing color, and the grotto given a mystical definition as the mysterious source of the eternal spring wind. The picture is typical of Shih-t'ao's most polished commissioned works, and clearly represents the artist at his most professional.

Drunk in Autumn Woods, on the other hand, is an untrammelled masterpiece by the eccentric individualist, here fulfilling a less direct form of commission. A poet friend had

asked him for the picture, to remember their celebration of the autumn season, enjoyed with the help of wine and poetry on an actual outing. His response was this exuberant visual approximation of the "drunkenness" their outing achieved, accompanied by several inscriptions remembering the occasion, boasting of a propensity for "madness" in all things, and inviting knowing friends to appreciate what he had done. Shih-t'ao's certainty that there was no one like him in the world is one of his most endearing traits, and in such paintings as this he dramatically demonstrates his uniqueness, creating the image of a state of mind. Yün Shou-p'ing in *Lotuses on a Summer Evening* (No. 34) attempts something very similar.

Drunk in Autumn Woods is catalogued, with all inscriptions translated by Aschwin Lippe, in *Chinese Calligraphy and Painting from the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.*, no. 77. Lippe dates the work on internal evidence to 1702-1703. See also Edwards, *The Painting of Tao-chi*, no. 24.

36. Shih-t'ao

Hibiscus and Lotus

Hanging scroll, ink on paper; inscribed by the artist

45¾ × 22½ in. (116.2 × 57.1 cm.)

Purchase, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David M.

Levitt, by exchange, 1978; 1978.254

The work is catalogued in Edwards, *The Painting of Tao-chi*, no. 42. Shih-t'ao's inscription is discussed above.

Shih-t'ao's love of flowers and gardens is closely tied to his lifelong search for happiness and contentment, and to his preoccupation late in life with his physical condition. What, exactly, his final achievement of an ordinary life in human society entailed we do not know; clearly, however, it was a major change from the rootless wandering and devout monkhood of his earlier and middle years. He often painted the Peach Blossom Spring theme, and the version of it now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., is another of the masterpieces of his late period; see John A. Pope and Thomas Lawton, *The Freer Gallery of Art*, vol. I: *China* (Tokyo: Kodansha [1971?]), pl. 56. Flowers meant beauty and sensuality to the old painter, as the leaves from the Sackler album of flowers (No. 37) and *Wilderness Colors* (No. 38) demonstrate. He utilized them to refer to his memories of youth, feminine beauty, and passion. All of this, however, is inseparable from the existential reality of lovely peonies, retiring hibiscus, and comforting lotus, seen again and again, year after year, never changing, as the vulnerable painter alone grows old. *Hibiscus and Lotus* is a poignant and irrepressible reminder of the thoughts and emotions of the old master in the face of beauty seen and remembered.

37. Shih-t'ao

Plum and Bamboo; Peonies

Two leaves from an album of nine leaves, ink and color on paper; inscribed by the artist

Average leaf: 10¼ × 13⅞ in. (25.6 × 34.5 cm.)

The Arthur M. Sackler Collections

The other leaves exhibited from this album are *Lotus and Red Polygonum* and *Hibiscus at Sunrise*. The album, *Album of Flowers and Portrait of Tao-chi*, is catalogued in detail by Marilyn and Shen Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship*, no. 25; the Fus date the work to about 1698. Three of the artist's inscriptions are translated above.

38. Shih-t'ao

Peach Blossoms

Leaf F from an album of twelve leaves, ink and color on paper; inscribed by the artist

10⅞ × 8½ in. (27.6 × 21.5 cm.)

The Sackler Fund, 1972; 1972.122f

The album *Wilderness Colors* has been published and annotated by Marilyn Fu and Wen Fong, *The Wilderness Colors of Tao-chi* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973). The inscription on *Peach Blossoms* is translated above.

39. Shih-t'ao

The Grotto of Chang Tao-ling (Chang kung tung)

Handscroll, ink and color on paper; inscribed by the artist

18 × 112⅝ in. (45.7 × 286.1 cm.)

Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982; 1982.126

The work is catalogued in Edwards, *The Painting of Tao-chi*, no. 31. Dated by the Metropolitan Museum to about 1702, the painting is followed by a long poetic text by Shih-t'ao and preceded by a frontispiece written by the distinguished calligrapher Ho Shao-chi (1799-1873). The scroll, one of Shih-t'ao's most accomplished late works, was formerly in the collection of Chang Ta-ch'ien.

40. Yüan Chiang (Chiang-tu, Kiangsu; active ca. 1690-ca. 1746); Ch'ing

The Chiu-ch'eng Palace, dated 1691

Twelve hanging scrolls, ink and color on silk; inscribed by the artist

81½ × approximately 228 in.

(207.0 × approximately 579.1 cm.)

Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982; 1982.125a-l

This work is the only one known within Yüan Chiang's enormous oeuvre that bears a concrete reign period date as well as a cyclical date—K'ang-hsi *hsin-wei*, or 1691. It is also the earliest known work by the master, and a painting of rare, colorful, imaginative brilliance. The artist's inscription reads in full: *Chiu-ch'eng-kung. Han-shang Yüan Chiang ni-ku, shih K'ang-hsi hsin-wei hsiao-yang yueh* ("The Palace of Nine Perfections. Yüan Chiang of Han-shang imitates antiquity, the time: the *hsin-wei* year of the K'ang-hsi reign, during Indian summer [the tenth lunar month]").

41. Yüan Chiang
Peach Blossom Spring, dated 1719
Twelve hanging scrolls, ink and color
on silk; inscribed by the artist
88½ × 287½ in. (225.0 × 730.0 cm.)
Anonymous loan

There are two paintings of *Peach Blossom Spring* by Yüan Chiang extant: a single hanging scroll dated 1718 in the Princeton Art Museum (James Cahill, "Yüan Chiang and his School," part 2, *Ars Orientalis* 6 [1966], fig. 6); and this set of twelve scrolls painted one year later. Yüan Yao painted another set of twelve hanging scrolls of the subject, dated 1746, in the Palace Museum, Peking (see Chü Ch'ung-cheng, *Yüan Chiang yü Yüan Yao* [Shanghai: Jen-min mei-shu ch'u-pan-she, 1982], p. 29). The 1719 hanging scrolls, like the Princeton painting, represent the fisherman of Wu-ling being greeted by the simple villagers he encounters after passing through the grotto. Beyond spreads the idyllic landscape of a hidden paradise, with the pink blossoms of flowering peach trees drifting in a golden mist. The contrast of style with the *Chiu-ch'eng Palace* of twenty-eight years earlier is that between a mature master and a brilliant young man. The unique vision is constant, but now he conveys his images of paradise in a strongly structured, substantial form, rather than in the drifting, impressionistic manner of his youth. The nervous, energetic brush lines of the earlier period have changed to firmer, more assertive contours, and the massively sculptural forms of the rocks build a powerful spatial structure and setting.

Peach Blossom Spring is signed *Chi-hai* [1719] *kao-yüeh* [fifth month] *Han-shang Yüan Chiang ni-ku*, and is followed by two seals of the artist, *Han-shang Yüan Chiang* and *Tzu Wen-t'ao*. It has been reproduced in Sotheby's sale catalogue *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Works of Art and Paintings*, no. 5052 (New York, June 15, 1983), lot 25.

42. Yüan Chiang
View of a Garden Villa (The Chan-yüan)
Handscroll, ink and color on silk; signed
by the artist
20% × 116 in. (52.2 × 294.6 cm.)
Gift of Constance Tang Fong in honor of
her mother, Mrs. P. Y. Tang, 1982;
1982.461

The Chan-yüan, or "Gazing Garden" of Nanking, was the estate of a Manchu official. The scroll exists in two nearly identical versions; the Museum's has been partially reproduced by Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, "A Chinese Garden Court: The Astor Court at The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Winter 1980/81), pp. 28–29. A second version, under the control of the Office of Cultural Objects, City of T'ienchin (Tientsin), is reproduced in Chü Ch'ung-cheng, *Yüan Chiang yü Yüan Yao*, pls. 8–10. It is likely that both are genuine, products of the active workshop discussed above. There are three seals of Yüan Chiang on the Museum's scroll:

Han-shang Yüan Wen-t'ao, in the lower right corner; and *Yüan Chiang chih yin* and *Wen-t'ao* in the left corner.

43. Lo P'ing (Hsieh-hsien, Anhui;
1733–1799); Ch'ing
Drinking in the Bamboo Garden, dated 1773
Hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper;
inscribed by the artist
31½ × 21½ in. (80.0 × 54.6 cm.)
John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913;
13.220.34

The influence of Chin Nung, so often evident in Lo P'ing's early work, is here entirely absent. Instead Lo appears in his second guise as a lyrical painter of superb technical powers, akin to Hua Yen. This work is exceptional for its delicate and complex handling of complementaries. Dry brushwork sets off light washes, as the rigid lines of the architecture do the twisting rocks and tree branches. The tangle of roofs and trees that so clearly frames the moonlit garden court and its visitors is itself enclosed by mist and open sky. The group of friends drinking beneath a lantern have met to celebrate the first full moon of the year. Just as each locale takes on significance by its natural and historical sites, so the passage of the year is marked in the literati calendar by days of specific meaning, deriving from cultural associations or, as here, a special natural beauty. The figures look out at the moonlit bamboo; or do they look at us? Two figures en route to the pavilion lead the eye around the periphery to the closed world of the garden.

In 1771 Lo P'ing had come to Peking from Yangchow with the scattered poems of Chin Nung that he had collected after his teacher's death in 1764. In the capital he organized the expensive project of their publication. He was based in the north through the winter of 1773, whereafter he returned to Yangchow, as the Hua Yen and Chin Nung of a less exceptional generation. This painting, dated to the beginning of the year, is likely to have been painted in Peking. One contemporary garden of the same name is well known, that of the Ch'eng family of salt merchants in Yangchow. Its last owner in the family, Ch'eng Chin-fang (1718–1784), was by this time also in Peking, where he shared several friends with Lo P'ing. The artist inscribed the work: "Drinking in the bamboo garden on the night of the first full moon of the *kuei-chi* year [1773] by Liang-feng Lo P'ing." His two seals read *P'ing* and *Chu-hsi ts'u-k'o*. There are two unidentified collector's seals and a title strip by Chen-i Chü-shih. The work has been published in Wan-go Weng, *Gardens in Chinese Art from Private and Museum Collections* (New York: China Institute in America, 1968), no. 16, fig. 17.

(Jonathan Hay)

44. Chin Nung (Hangchow, Chekiang;
1687–after 1764); Ch'ing
Plum Blossoms, dated 1757
Album of twelve leaves, ink on paper;
inscribed by the artist

9 $\frac{15}{16}$ × 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (25.2 × 29.8 cm.)
Lent by Douglas Dillon; L.1981.15.11a-l

Chin Nung was one of several of the Yangchow eccentrics, friends who moved in the same literati circles (see Alfreda Murck, "Wang Shih-shen's 'Asking for Snow Water': Tributes to a Tea Drinker," *Record of The Art Museum, Princeton University* 37, no. 2 [1978]). The painting of Chin, Wang Shih-shen, and Cheng Hsieh has common roots in calligraphy and depends heavily on the contribution of poetry to the whole. These plum blossom images are little concerned with vision, but have the arresting visual effect of fine and unusual written characters. In each case they embody a rich poetic idea: the association of old age, cold, and brightness (Leaf C); the freshness and delicacy of youth (Leaf H); and the inner struggle of a survivor (Leaf F). Many plum blossom paintings by Chin Nung are known, mostly dating from the later 1750s and early 1760s. They often share poems in common, to such a degree that one imagines a cottage industry turning out plum and other genres of painting. The last leaf was inscribed by Chin at the home of his poetry student Lo P'ing, sometimes considered the painter of certain plum images bearing Chin's inscription. One leaf of an album by Lo P'ing in the Finlayson collection, Toronto, bears the same poem as Leaf D of this album (Barry Till, *Chinese Paintings in Canadian Collections* [Victoria, B. C., 1982], no. 20). The plum blossom paintings in that album are also closely comparable to those in this one in format and style. The iconography repeated through dozens of Chin's poems about plum blossoms concerns cold hands, freezing ink, hunger, daytime sleep, and rice requested or received. The inscriptions are, at one level, elegant records of an economic transaction, in which a justifying and no doubt justified urgency surfaces: "Only this old man, in poverty, sleeps at midday/The plum blossoms open, but not the gate" (Leaf K).

Leaf C carries the artist's seal *Tung-hsin hsien-sheng*, and is inscribed as translated above. The work is signed and dated "Painting, poetry, and calligraphy by Ch'ü-chiang Wai-shih. Tenth day of the tenth month." Leaf F carries the signature *Su-fa-lo chi su-fa-lo hua*, and the seals *Shou* and *Men*. Leaf H carries the signature "Painted and inscribed by Ch'ü-chiang Wai-shih," and the seal *Chin Chi-chin yin*. The album bears seven dif-

ferent seals of the artist. Three seals are those of Chang Po-chü (20th c.), and there are five unidentified collector's seals: *She-nan Ts'ao-shih Kuo-yün-lou chien-ts'ang*; *Hsing-ch'eng chen wan*; *Chu-shih Fei-nan shou-ts'ang chi*; *Er-pai lan-t'ing-chai so-ts'ang Shu-hua yin*. A title strip is signed "in the collection of Chün-ho." (Jonathan Hay)

45. Hua Yen (Lin-t'ing, Fukien;
1682-1765); Ch'ing
White Peonies and Rock, dated 1752
Hanging scroll, ink and light color
on paper; inscribed by the artist
50 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (127.6 × 57.2 cm.)
Gift of John C. Ferguson, 1913; 13.220.119

The first generation of Yangchow artists after Shih-t'ao was active in the city itself, sometimes only sporadically, from the 1720s to the 1740s. In this period a new lyrical vision was created on the basis of the highest technical skill, notably by Li Shan, Huang Shen, Kao Feng-han, and Hua Yen. Their pictorial lyricism is one of the most important dimensions of the movement associated with the Yangchow eccentrics. This work postdates Hua Yen's known activity in the city, but it has the characteristic early Yangchow qualities of dazzling control of ink and color and striking imagery. The bravado ink-wash rock is a hallmark of painters of the period. In its reference to nature, it is an image of something fleetingly glimpsed, but is equally exciting for the compelling momentum of the ink fields. The juxtaposition with the peony required skill of a quite different kind, and reveals a virtuosity of which the artist was justifiably proud. The painting's last owner was John C. Ferguson, one of the pioneering Western connoisseurs of Chinese painting, who presented the work to the Museum in 1913. The artist's inscription is translated above; his signature reads "Hsin-lo shan-jen wrote the poem and painted this in the eighth month of the *jen-shen* year [1752]." His seals are *K'ung-ch'en shih hua*, *Hua Yen*, *Ch'in-yüeh*, and *Cheng-so-chai*. There are two unidentified collector's seals. The work has been published in *Masters of the Brush: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy from the 16th to the 19th Century* (New York: The Queens Museum, 1977), no. 15. (Jonathan Hay)

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